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April 26, 1892.

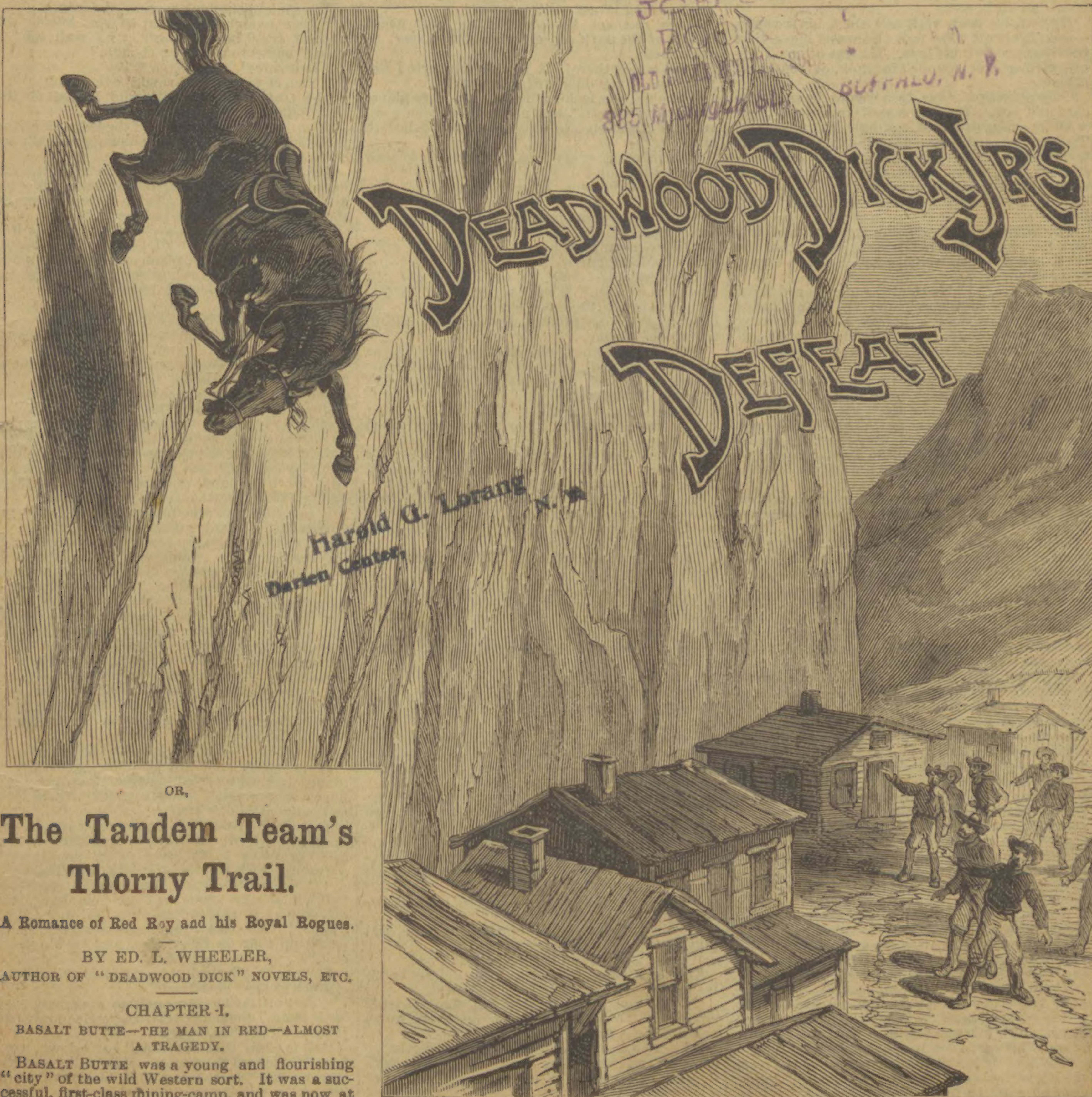
No. 770.

\$2.50
a Year.

PUBLISHED WEEKLY BY BEADLE AND ADAMS.
No. 98 WILLIAM STREET, NEW YORK.

Price,
5 Cents.

Vol. XXX.



OR,

The Tandem Team's Thorny Trail.

A Romance of Red Roy and his Royal Rogues.

BY ED. L. WHEELER,
AUTHOR OF "DEADWOOD DICK" NOVELS, ETC.

CHAPTER I.

BASALT BUTTE—THE MAN IN RED—ALMOST
A TRAGEDY.

BASALT BUTTE was a young and flourishing "city" of the wild Western sort. It was a successful, first-class mining-camp, and was now at what was probably its boiling point. A single street ran along through the gulch bottom, lined

WITH A CRY OF TERROR THE NOBLE HORSE LEAPED OUT IN AIR AND DISAPPEARED FROM SIGHT.

on both sides with buildings of various sorts and sizes, the largest of which was the Silver Bugle Hotel. Next to the Silver Bugle in size, and far surpassing it in local favor, was the Palace Saloon, the headquarters of the camp, run by a young, dashing and good-looking woman known as "Queen of Hearts."

The buildings on both sides of the street stood shoulder to shoulder for a distance of nearly half a mile, while to the north of the street, behind the buildings on that side, were tents and shanties in great number. The camp was of nearly two thousand population, and was a reproduction, on a smaller scale, of what now great Deadwood had been in its youth.

South of the street, behind the Silver Bugle, the Palace Saloon, and the other buildings on that side, rose a wall of rock to a height of two hundred feet or more, sloping outward until it fairly overhung the single thoroughfare. A stone dropped from its crest would strike in the middle of the highway, in front of the Palace. The rock was basalt, and this cliff was the "basalt butte" from which the camp took its name. At the top was a level ledge.

On this ledge, at the time which marks the opening of our story, leaning over the brink and gazing down upon the busy avenue below, was a man clad all in red.

His hat, his coat, vest, and shirt, his trousers—even his boots were red. So was a mask that partly concealed his face. He was of good figure, strong and rounded in limb, evidently an athlete.

Only a portion of his face was to be seen—his chin and jaw. The first was of the square type, with the suggestion of a dimple in the center. The jaw was strongly outlined, expressive of determination. The ends of a graceful mustache showed below the mask, and his skin had a smooth, soft look, like a woman's.

Suddenly he started back, looked behind him, listened.

The ledge was not broad anywhere, and this was its widest place. Directly back from the brink ran a pass in which, some distance away, was a bend.

It was toward this bend the man in red fixed his attention, and now could be plainly heard the rapid tattoo of a horse's hoofs, drawing nearer each second. Suddenly around the bend dashed a runaway horse, with a charming woman trying in vain to control it.

The man in red took in the situation at a glance. Another quarter-minute and horse and fair rider would go over the verge together, to be dashed to death in the gulch below. Without the loss of a single second after the horse came into sight around the bend the masked man ran toward it, arms outstretched toward the woman, shouting:

"Throw yourself off into my arms! It is your only hope! Death is yonder! Now! Jump—jump!"

The horse, a superb black, was thundering forward at mad speed. The woman, pale and wild-eyed, saw the man in red, heard his words, and acted promptly.

In spite of her paleness and evident terror, the woman seemed to be perfectly cool. She lifted her knee from over the horn of the side-saddle, drew her foot from the stirrup, and at the right moment slipped off.

The man in red caught her, but was almost carried off his feet by the force of the shock, and only for a projection of rock against which he staggered would have fallen to the ground. The moment he stopped he turned his head to look after the flying horse.

He was just in time to see it take the frightful plunge, as, with a cry of terror, the noble horse leaped out in air and disappeared from sight. Barely five seconds had elapsed, and he gave his attention to the woman, who was now endeavoring to free herself from his arms. Her rapid breath fanned his face, her eyes met his, and she was about to speak when—

The next moment another actor appeared upon the scene.

Hoof-strokes had been heard again, and into sight dashed another horse and rider.

The rider was a man, a young man of noble appearance, and bearing, and though riding at a rapid pace his horse was under control.

There was a flush of excitement upon his face at first, but the instant he beheld the terrible precipice just ahead his face assumed the hue of death, and while he drew rein with one hand he covered his eyes for a moment with the other.

Obedient to the master's touch upon the rein, the horse slackened its speed at once, and finally stopped within a few feet of the brink, the man leaping lightly out of the saddle at the same moment. No sooner did his feet touch the ground

than he sprang over the intervening distance and looked over.

One moment he gazed, and reeling back, again covered his eyes.

"My God!" he cried. "This is more than I can bear! My love—my darling! To think of your meeting a fate like this!"

A sob shook his frame, and for some seconds he did not move or speak. When he removed his hand from his eyes it was to look back along the way he had come, and all around on the ledge.

"Why did she not think to throw herself off, when she saw this terrible danger before her?" he asked himself. "But, she has been too horrified to act. There was a chance for life here, while down there it was certain death. Oh, God, is it true that she is dead?"

Helplessly he looked around. She was not there; the awful truth was forced home. Her mangled form was in the gulch below—there could be no doubt of it.

Again he stepped to the edge and looked down. There was a great crowd in the street, gathered around the dark, dread object that lay there.

Great excitement prevailed, as could be plainly seen, and no wonder. From every direction men were still running to join the crowd, which was growing larger each moment.

For a moment the man on the cliff gazed fixedly at the dark object, when with a start he exclaimed:

"She is not there! It is only the horse I see! What have they done with her body?"

While he was looking down, men were glancing up every second, and presently he was seen, and the attention of all the crowd was called to him.

In a moment every face was turned toward him, and he called down:

"What have you done with her? Is she dead?"

There was a short interval before the answer came back.

"Lo ye mean ther hoss?" was shouted. "Ef ye do, he's deader'n a stone."

"No, no!" the man on the cliff cried. "I mean the woman. What has become of her?"

He could see the men looking from one to another, evidently talking, and this time the interval was longer.

"Thar wasn't no woman on ther creetur," was presently shouted back to his astonished ears. "Ther hoss kem down hyer alone, and he's knocked all to sassage."

Then she had escaped!

The man sprang back once more and looked eagerly around.

Nowhere was the one for whom he searched to be seen. Himself and his horse were the only living creatures on the ledge.

Stepping to his horse he sprang lightly into the saddle and cantered back to the bend, where he looked down the trail with searching scrutiny, but with like result.

That he was puzzled, now, his face plainly indicated.

"Where can she be?" he questioned. "They say she did not fall with the horse, and they certainly ought to know. I was not a minute—not half a minute behind her, yet I fail to find her. Why, she had not time to walk back to this bend before I came up."

He reflected in silence.

Dismounting, he led his horse forward toward the ledge again, making a close inspection of the ground all the way.

The floor was of hard, bare rock, washed clean by the rains of ages, and not a mark was to be seen save here and there a white scratch made by the shoes of the flying runaway.

"It is more than I can understand," the baffled man mused. "They must be mistaken down there; there is no other explanation. Nothing was to save her from going over, if she did not drop from the horse here; and she did not do that or I would find her here. She must be under the horse."

Stepping to the edge he looked over as before.

The scene below was practically the same, and many faces were upturned toward him.

"Have you found her?" he called down.

Talking among themselves, they did not catch his words, and had to ask him to repeat.

"Have you found the body of the woman?" he shouted. "Have you looked under the horse to see if she is there?"

"I tell ye there wasn't no woman aboard ther creetur," the same man answered. "We have turned the carcass over, and thar ain't a sign of a rider hyer."

The man on the cliff fairly staggered as he drew back from the brink, and he pressed his

hands to his head. This awful mystery was almost as bad as the terrible fate itself.

"They are mistaken," he cried. "She did go over; there was nothing to save her. The very fact of her not being here proves it. Hal now I have it. Falling apart from the animal, she has struck upon the roof of some building. I will look once more and then hasten down."

Turning to the brink once again, he knelt and took a long and careful look below, searching the roof of every building within a reasonable radius.

His careful search resulted in nothing, however, as we know. Nothing was to be seen anywhere that bore resemblance to the dear form he looked for, and at last he rose to his feet with a sigh.

"I do not see her," he mused, "but she is there none the less—How can she be any where else? She has struck some roof, and has rolled off behind some building, or is perhaps lying between two of them. I will find her, once I get down there. But, how to get down? I shall have to ask them."

He called to get the attention of the men below.

"Will you tell me the nearest way to get there, citizens?" he asked.

The same spokesman responded again.

"Ther narrer trail thar to yer left is the nighest one," he informed. "Et wull take a man o' narve to travel et, though."

"Is it safe?"

"Yas, ef ye have got sand."

The traveler drew back and looked at the trail indicated.

It was a narrow extension of the ledge along the face of the cliff, to the left, sloping gradually toward the gulch.

Judging it to be passable, he mounted his horse, and in sorrowing mood made his way along the narrow shelf with as little concern as though riding on a broad highway.

At times the ledge was so narrow that his left leg touched the rocky wall, but he minded it not, riding as though in a dream, and so he continued until finally the end was reached and a broader trail led to the bottom of the gulch.

CHAPTER II.

THE MAYOR'S SUSPICION—HIGH WORDS—SURPRISE.

THE Mayor of Basalt Butte was one Archibald Grimm. He was about fifty years of age, tall, broad-shouldered, and heavily built. He wore a full beard, that covered his face almost to his keen, gray eyes. With great force of character, he had naturally come to the front, and his fellow-citizens had thrust upon him the dignity and responsibility that were now his. He ruled with an iron hand, and more than one citizen had felt the strength of his powerful arm.

It was this man who had responded to the inquiries of the stranger on the cliff.

At the time when the black horse lunged over the precipice the camp was pursuing the even tenor of its way, and everybody was attending to his own or his neighbor's business with accustomed diligence. The mayor was just crossing the street toward the Palace Saloon when he heard a wild cry, apparently right overhead, and glancing up, what was his amazement to see a horse plunging down from the height above. With a cry of warning to others who were near, the mayor jumped out of the way, and the next instant the horse struck the ground with a thud that fairly jarred the windows in the buildings near at hand.

"Great storm-king!" ejaculated the mayor.

It was all he could say just then, and after a glance upward to assure himself that no more horses were coming, he sprang forward to look at the mangled carcass.

The beast was broken almost to pulp, its bones, in slivers, were protruding through the hide in many places, and every muscle was quivering with the last flickerings of life.

"Great storm-king!" the mayor repeated. "What do ye make out of this hyar, me childrun? A side-saddle, too, by ther livin' Jupiter! Me childrun, thar's somethin' happened up thar on ther ledge, and ye kin 'pend on't."

It was a way he had, this addressing his fellow-citizens as his "children."

"Ther critter has been rode by a woman, thar 'ar is plain," one man declared. "She must hev jumped off of thar."

"Et is plain that she didn't come down, anyhow," observed the mayor. "I was hyer when ther creetur started and when he arrove, and I kin sw'ar nobody was aboard of him, or kem along with him."

Other remarks were made, and presently

some one in the crowd called attention to the fact that somebody was looking over the ledge.

"Somethin' hits me as rather queer," remarked the mayor, when the last exchange of words with the man on the cliff had been made. "We know ther woman didn't come down, and ef she ain't up thar, *whar is she?*"

"That's ther question," agreed the man nearest him. "Et looks funny, ter say ther most about et."

"Mebby thar has been sort o' dark work goin' on up thar?" the mayor gave hint. "Mebby that 'ar stranger knows more than he p'tends he does? But, we'll see when he gits hyar. He's got narve, anyhow, ef he is goin' ter come around ther Fiddle-bow Pass, and don't ye forgit et."

That was what the stranger was going to do, as they found out, for presently they could see him as he threaded his way along the dangerous ledge.

By this time nearly the whole population of the camp was in the street, choking it in the vicinity of the dead horse.

A great deal of talking was done, while they waited for the arrival of the stranger.

Presently he was seen coming down the gulch at a flying pace, and when he entered the street the crowd fell back and made room for him to approach the Palace.

His horse was admired by one and all, and the dead one, it was seen, had been nearly its match. The rider, as they saw him, was a man of perhaps thirty, with a sad, slightly pale face, and dark, magnetic eyes.

When he drew rein, at the place where the dead horse lay, he cried:

"Have you found her yet, men? Have you looked everywhere? She certainly did come over the ledge, for she is not up there."

"Young man," said the mayor, stepping out from the rest, "don't you s'pose we know what we ar' talkin' about down hyar? I seen ther hoss fall, and I kin swear that nobody fell with him."

"You say you saw it fall, sir?"

"Yes, I seen et fall."

"I suppose you mean you saw it when it struck the ground."

"Ye s'pose too much, young man. I seen et when et kem over ther butte, and I tell ye nobody kem with et."

"Then where in heaven's name is my wife? Men of Basalt Butte, I call upon you to help me find her."

Mr. Grimm was scratching his head.

"Stranger," he drawled, "this hyar has a queer look about et. You say ther woman ain't up thar, and we know she didn't come down hyar. Do ye want us ter believe that she melted off into ther air?"

"Her disappearance is certainly as mysterious as though she had," was the young man's response. "In spite of what you say, I am sure she must have come over with the horse. Have you looked all around, to see if you could find the body? Don't you think she may have struck some building?"

This gave the crowd a new idea, and a hundred men set about searching at once for a mangled body; but not the mayor.

"See hyar," he cried. "My name is Archibald Grimm, and I am mayor of this hyar camp of Basalt Butte. I bate ter have a man tell me that I don't know what I'm talkin' about."

"But, there is a chance for a mistake, surely, sir."

"Nary a chance for ary mistake. I heerd a yell, ther hoss's yell, I mean; and I looked right up. Thar was ther hoss, comin' right down at me like a twenty-ton boulder, and nothin' ner nobody else *war* comin'."

"I do not doubt your word sir. But, did you not jump, to get out of the way? And in doing so, might you not have missed sight of the rider, if she came over the ledge a moment after the horse? She certainly did come over, for she is not up there, and there is no other possible explanation."

"You say right, in one p'int," agreed the mayor. "I did dodge out of ther way, and might have missed sight of ther woman ef she kem over durin' that second or two; but in ther natur' of things in gen'ral everything falls straight, and ef she fell over that ledge she'd strike hyer in ther street in spite of all creation and your argymints ter boot."

There was no questioning this, and the stranger was for the moment silent.

"And that's why I say this hyar thing has a queer look about et," the mayor went on. "Ther woman didn't come over hyar, and you say she ain't up thar. Thar is only one other

thing she could 'a' done, and that was, ter mel away like ary shadder, which we don't take no stock in. What have ye got ter say on *that* head?"

"I know not what to say," was the answer. "This suspense is almost maddening. My wife and I were riding along in the direction of this camp, when, suddenly, her horse took fright and shot ahead like a thunderbolt. I tried to follow at once, but mine reared and plunged so that I was not able to urge it forward for the space of half a minute at least. I saw my wife disappear around the bend up there, and followed her as fast as I could. When I reached the bend and saw the ledge before me I knew at once the horse had gone over, and supposed of course she had been carried to death along with it. There you have it, straight."

"I won't say et ain't so," responded the mayor, "but et is queer what bekem of ther woman. Me childrun," to the crowd, "what ef this hyar stranger has put ther woman out of ther way, and come hyar with this story ter tell so as ter clear himself of et? What—"

"Stop right where you are!" the stranger ordered, sternly. "Only a fool would suggest such a thing as that—"

"A fool! Do you call Archibald Grimm a fool? By ther livin' Jupiter! but I have a notion ter snatch ye off o' that 'ar hoss and larn ye a lesson or two."

"I say only a fool would suggest such a thing," the stranger repeated. "I would have cut off my right hand sooner than harm one hair of my wife's head. She was more than life to me. I have come here with no lie on my lips, sir. I call upon you and your citizens to help me find my wife, or her body."

"Yes, I reckon we'll do that," was the growl, "and I reckon we'll hold you to answer ther charge if thar is any proof or sp'icion that p'int's your way. What do ye say, me childrun?"

"Ther story is fishy, ter say ther most of et," one man made answer.

"My God!" the stranger cried aloud, with an almost groan, "is it not enough to lose the light of my life, without being accused of having foully murdered her? I swear to you, men of Basalt Butte, the truth is as I have stated. I will give five hundred dollars to the man who will find my wife, dead or alive, and bring her to me. This mystery must be solved—it shall be solved!"

This earnest appeal carried conviction.

"Wull, ye seem ter mean et, anyhow," muttered the mayor. "We'll 'vestigate ther matter all we kin, but I don't see ther way clear ter go ter work. Ef ther woman ain't up thar, and ain't down hyar, whar is she?"

"That is the mystery. But, have you looked all around here, men? Do you see nothing of the body anywhere?"

This to the men who had been making the search, and who were now returning and mingling again with the crowd.

"Nary a sign of her," one answered. "We have searched every foot of ther ground, too."

"Where can she be? Heavens! I shall go mad if this is not explained soon. A general search must be made, people of Basalt Butte, and I call upon you to turn out and aid me. Five hundred dollars to the successful man!"

This repeating of the offer aroused the crowd to action, and fully three-fourths of the men offered their services.

"I am a stranger here, as you see," the young man went on, "and do not know the ground. I want you to go ahead and make the search a thorough one. I will pay you for the work, besides the reward to the successful man. My wife must be found before dark, dead or alive. Do you hear me? She *must* be found!"

Everybody was talking at once, or trying to, and there was almost confusion, but now a cheer was given, and more than half the crowd dispersed to go in quest of the mysteriously-missing woman.

If she was to be found they meant to find her, and each was eager to be the successful one, in order to secure the liberal reward.

"By ther way, stranger," now remarked the mayor of the camp, "we haven't got yer handle yet. S'pose ye let us know who ye are, what yer business is, and what et was brought ye here."

"Under the circumstances I will tell you who I am," was the response. "My name is Richard Bristol, though I am better known as Deadwood Dick, Junior. You—"

"Deadwood Dick?"

"Yes; Deadwood Dick, Junior. You may have heard of me—I infer that you have. Do you now doubt my story, mayor? For once I am baffled. Here is a mystery without a single

clew, and one that strikes home. Where is my brave, bonny Kate?"

And the strong man shook—shivered with his suppressed grief.

CHAPTER III.

VAIN SEARCH—MYSTERIOUS MISSIVES—NEW ARRIVALS.

FEW places there are in the Wild West where the name of Deadwood Dick is unknown. It was known here at this camp of Basalt Butte, and the mention of it changed the whole aspect of the situation at once in Dick's favor. A score and more of men in the crowd had given voice to the exclamation—"Deadwood Dick!" among them the mayor, and that worthy now stepped forward with extended hand, exclaiming further.

"Great storm-king! Is et possible that I see before me ther great and only? By ther livin' Jupiter, but this hyer is good fer sore eyes! Me childrun, gaze upon this gentleman, and behold ther greatest detective of ther day. Sir, forgive me fer what I hinted at, wull ye?"

Dick had accepted the offered hand and given it a hearty shake.

"Certainly I forgive you," he responded. "Overlook my hot words in response, too. I was in no mood to be trifled with, as you can understand."

"Sartainly not; but, ye see how et looked. This hyar is a mystery a darn sight bigger'n ther hoss that kem over ther ledge."

"And what is going to be done, mayor? Can't you suggest some explanation of it? Where can she be?"

"I only wish I could tell ye, Deadwood Dick. Like you, I am knocked clean out."

"Will you go back with me to the top of the cliff, and take a look at the lay of the land there? You may find something which I have missed."

"Sartain I will. Thar will be a good many ahead of us, though, fer ther lads ar' makin' off in that direction about as fast as they kin go. But, come on, and we'll amble up thar."

Dismounting and leaving his horse in the care of a man connected with the Silver Bugle, Dick set off with the mayor on foot to climb to the ledge once more, to make another, and if possible more thorough examination.

Needless to go with them over the ground again. The search was as fruitless as Dick's alone had been. Every inch of the trail was examined, and every possible spot for a mile around was searched, but not a trace of the missing woman could be discovered anywhere.

Finally, completely baffled and discouraged, Dick and the mayor returned to the camp, followed by the others who had gone out. At the camp the same story was told, a fruitless quest. A thorough search had been made under the cliff, but the missing woman could not be found anywhere, nor a sign of her.

Entering the Silver Bugle, Deadwood Dick threw himself upon a chair by a table and bowed his head upon his arms.

The redoubtable Richard was almost crushed. Fearless in the face of foes, as intrepid as a lion when in danger, this great loss of a loved and loving wife, together with the awful mystery, was more than he could bear.

Night had come on, supper at the hotel was over, but Dick had no thought of his own needs. Tired and hungry as he was, he did not know it. There was but one thought in his mind, and that for his wife,—for his brave noble wife, the peerless Kodak Kate.

Even the business that had brought him to this camp of Basalt Butte was for the time being entirely out of mind. That he had an object in coming there goes without saying. But, whatever it was, it was as nothing to him compared with this new mystery that occupied his mind, and in which he was so personally concerned.

No one disturbed him, and for a long time he remained thus, his brain busy with the great enigma.

It was one which he could not solve. It was one to which he could find no key. It was one that baffled him utterly, invincible detective though he was.

He was oblivious to his surroundings to all intents and purposes. There was a crowd in the room, but he heeded it not, nor did he once move or stir till finally a shouting without announced the coming of the belated daily stage.

When he roused up it was with a start, as though he had actually been entirely out of himself, so to say, and as he removed his arms from the table, something white, two objects there were, dropped from the board and fell fluttering to the floor.

Hastily picking them up, Dick found them to

be two envelopes, each bearing his name on the face.

The handwriting of one he recognized instantly. *It was that of his wife!*

With a cry of joy he sprung to his feet, looking at the well-known writing—proof in itself that Kate was alive.

The crowd was pressing out of doors to see the stage come into town, and Dick stepped immediately to the bar, where he addressed the man in attendance.

"Did you notice any one near me while I was sitting at that table?" he demanded.

"Not in p'tic'lar, sir," was the answer. "There was a good-sized crowd in ther room 'most all ther time, and a good many was all around."

This was far from satisfactory.

"Well, see here," Dick cried, showing the two letters. "These letters were laid on my arms while I lay there, by some person. Did you observe who did it? I will give twenty dollars to find out."

"You will have to go further than me, sir," was the candid return. "I didn't see any one with letters in his hand, and didn't see any one monkeyin' around you at all. But, then, I wasn't watchin' of course, an' it might 'a' been done a dozen times 'thout my knowin' it."

Baffled again, and puzzled, Dick turned to a light and opened the letters, the one from Kate first.

It was worded like this:

"DICK:—

"I am all right, and for the present safe.

"KATE."

"What can it mean?" Dick asked himself. "It is short and to the point, but where is she? How did she escape the danger of the cliff? I cannot understand it. It is everything, however, to know this much; and it is not to be doubted, for I cannot be deceived in the handwriting. Perhaps this other letter will explain more."

Without further delay he tore open the second missive.

This was addressed in a strong masculine hand, one which Dick did not recognize, and contained the following:

"DEADWOOD DICK, DARE-DEVIL DETECTIVE:—

"The life of your wife depends on your going away from Basalt Butte without trying to carry out the business that brought you here. You are given forty-eight hours in which to make up your mind what you will do. You will receive no further warning, so, if you value a fair offer, be wise in your decision. Your wife's head will pay the forfeit if you do not go.

"This is from—

"YOU KNOW WHOM."

Dick pulled his mustache, and a dark look was upon his brow.

"No, hang me if I know whom it is from," he muttered. "Here is more mystery than ever. Who could have known of my coming here? And how can my secret business be so vastly important? I fail to catch on. Well, it is everything to know Kate is alive and well, and if I do not rescue her now it will be because I have forgotten my cunning. But, here is the stage."

Knowing that his wife was alive, Deadwood Dick was a new being at once. He was something of himself again. The mystery was as deep as ever, of course, but now it had a different aspect. There was hope!

Thrusting the letters into his pocket he stepped out on the piazza.

The stage had arrived by this time and stopped, and the passengers were getting out.

There was a goodly number of them, for Basalt Butte was drawing people daily, and the one just alighting as Dick stepped out was a veiled woman, evidently young.

This personage tripped lightly to the steps of the piazza, as lightly up them, and entered the hall entrance. Dick looked after her as she disappeared, not because there was anything familiar about her appearance, but perhaps because she was veiled, and a veil, to him, suggested mystery.

Others were meanwhile getting down and out, and the only other to draw a second glance from Dick was a man with a pair of "Galloway" whiskers, who had something of a foreign look about him. Dick had never seen him before, to his knowledge, and yet something seemed to impress upon him the idea that he was a personage with whom he was destined to have to do.

This man entered the bar-room of the Silver Bugle, along with others, and as there was no further interest respecting the stage for Dick, he too returned to the bar-room.

Already the new arrivals were registering, and it soon came to the turn of the man with the imported chops, or "Galloways."

After he had inscribed his name Dick found opportunity to glance at the register, and learned his name was Henry Whipple.

Presently there was a call from the ladies' room, and the man at the bar sent an assistant.

When he returned he inscribed on the register the name—Anne Parson, of Virginia City.

Dick himself had not yet registered, but did so now, giving his true name.

Supper had been saved for arrivals by the stage, and now feeling his need, Dick went with others to the eating-room.

He hoped to get a sight of the face of the woman who had come by the stage, for the fact of her being veiled had roused his curiosity, but he was disappointed, for when she entered the room she had a veil on that covered her face down to her mouth.

That she was good-looking Dick could not doubt, for the lower part of her face was very fair, and the chin had a dimple that lent to it a bewitching charm. She was quiet and retiring in manner, and spoke to no one during the meal.

The man with the whiskers, Mr. Whipple, was not so quiet. He talked with everybody, and did not make any pretext to keep his business a secret. He was traveling agent for a business house, and was out trying to drum up a little trade in this new field.

Deadwood Dick, however, looked upon him with suspicion.

The very fact of his making his business known so readily, when there was no call for it, looked strange.

Dick had little to say during the meal, and after it was over he set out to find the mayor of the camp to have a further talk with him, now that he had news to communicate.

Inquiring for him, he was told he would probably find him at the Palace, so there he went.

Entering, the mayor's big figure was almost the first one he saw, and he stepped forward to where he was seated in conversation with another man.

This other was a rather handsome, dashing fellow, perhaps twenty-eight years of age, with a smooth skin and a fine, curving mustache of the admired silky sort. He had cool, keen eyes of a steely blue.

"Hillo!" exclaimed the mayor, looking up when Dick laid a hand on his arm; "I see you are 'round, Deadwood Dick. Ye look brightened up, too. What is et? Have ye heerd somethin' about yer lost wife? I hope ye hev, by ther livin' Jupiter!"

"Yes, I have heard from her," answered Dick "and according to what I learn she is alive and well, but where she is I do not know. The mystery is almost as bad as ever. In fact, I don't know but it's worse. And the manner in which I heard from her is mysterious, too."

"Wull, sot down, me noble Richard, and let's hear all about et. 'Low me ter interdoose ye to Mister Harry Stacey, better knowed 'round hyer as "Haudsome Harry."

CHAPTER IV.

DICK'S BUSINESS—QUEEN OF HEARTS—SUDDEN THOUGHT.

HANDSOME HARRY, as the man had been called by the mayor in his introducing, leaned over the table and extended his hand to Dick, saying:

"Deadwood Dick, I'm proud to know you. I have often heard of you, and this is a real pleasure. Sit down and join us in our quiet talk and smoke. We were just talking about that strange case of yours."

"Thanks," said Dick, after the grasp of hands, and he sat down. "I suppose that strange affair is the talk of the town to-night, and no wonder, for it is about the greatest puzzle I ever tackled in my life. I cannot understand how my wife disappeared so suddenly and so completely."

"But, ye say ye hev heerd from her," the mayor urged. "What is et? What has she ter say about et? Don't she tell ye whar she is?"

"She does not. All her note has to say is this: 'I am all right and for the present safe.'"

"Wull, that beats ther Dutch. How did you get the note?"

"You will say that beats the Dutch, too, I think. I was in the hotel, sitting by a table with my head on my arms thinking, and when I roused up the notes fell to the floor. Somebody put them there while I was in my brown study."

"The notes do you say?" queried the sport.

"Yes; there was one in a man's hand, and it

was of rather a threatening nature. Here it is; I will read it to you."

Accordingly Dick took the missives from his pocket and read both, the mayor and the sport listening with close attention as the words dropped from his lips.

"Will you allow me to look at that writing?" the sport asked.

Dick gave the paper into his hand.

Handsome Harry looked at it critically for a moment, and gave it back.

"I thought it possible I might recognize it," he remarked, "but I don't. It leaves you all in the dark, there being no signature to it."

"What is ther sign to et?" asked the mayor.

"Simply: 'You know whom,'" answered Dick.

"But ye don't know jest ther same."

"I do not. But, I read it aloud to you; what do you think of it, mayor? And you, too, Mr. Stacey?"

"Wull, et sticks in my gizzard that somebody has got onto ther biz that has brung ye hyar," the mayor offered as his guess; "and havin' reason ter fear ye, has give ye this warnin' ter git up and git."

"The note says as much," said Dick. "But, that is where more mystery comes in. My mission here was a perfectly harmless one, and I came with only good intent toward a certain person whom I came in quest of. I cannot understand, anyhow, how my business could be known."

"Perhaps," now suggested Handsome Harry, "the whole matter has been a prearranged job from the beginning, to get you here, and then get you into this sort of trap. I don't pretend to say it is so, but maybe that is the way of it. You see, this note does not seem to be guessing at anything, but speaks as of a known truth; and then, too, the unaccountable disappearance of your wife."

Deadwood Dick was thoughtful.

"No; I can't accept that view of it," he said.

"And why not?"

"Well, in the first place, the matter could not have been prearranged, so far as the disappearance of my wife. That is out of the question."

"So you say, but you will have to give us your reasons before we can see it in the same light as you see it yourself."

"I will explain, then. No one could have known I would bring my wife with me, to begin with; and bringing her, no one could have guessed by which trail we would come to your camp."

"That's level enough," agreed the mayor.

"And yet," urged Handsome Harry, "everything seems to have been in readiness for your wife's disappearance. I am only arguing for the sake of bringing out points, you understand."

"Certainly; I understand that. Suppose such a scheme to have been laid, and some means taken to frighten our horses, how could the persons tell how it would turn out? My own horse might have gone on in advance, or both might have gone forward together."

"And perhaps that would have pleased your foes all the more, had both horses plunged over the cliff, riders with them."

Dick looked at the handsome sport keenly.

Harry met his gaze steadfastly enough, and a smile curled his lips.

"Perhaps you are right," Dick rejoined, after a moment, "but if my foes know anything about Deadwood Dick, they ought to know that he would not be carried over the cliff unless fastened to the horse so he could not leap off."

"Well, well, it is past understanding, so I give it up. But where do you imagine your wife can be?"

"She is not far from here, that is sure," Dick declared. "I have an idea she is in this camp of Basalt Butte."

"By the way," the mayor here put in, "might et be askin' too much ef we inquire what yer business hyer was? Mebby that will throw some light on ther subjeck."

"Since events have turned out as they have, I see no reason for secrecy about that," responded Dick. "It was our plan, though, to come here under assumed names, do our little work, and go away again, hoping to escape any of our usual exciting experiences. Still, there is no need for me to proclaim my business from the house-tops, and I suppose I may trust you, gentlemen." He was assured.

"Well, then, for my errand. I came here to find one Gregory Mayham, an Englishman, who has just fallen heir to an estate in England, by the death of his cousin. This Gregory is said to be a pretty decent sort of fellow, and came to this country as a poor young man to better his fortunes. He was last heard of at a town in Idaho, and taking up the trail there it indicated

that he had come to this camp of Basalt Butte, and hence my coming after him. While I am about it, do you know anything of such a person?"

"Have never heard that name here, to my knowledge," declared Handsome Harry.

"No, ner me, uther," the mayor subjoined.

"Well," continued Dick, "you see how harmless my errand is, and how needless it would be for foes to go to such harsh measures to turn me back. They have probably had their labor for their pains. Forty-eight hours grace is given me, and in that time I can probably do my business and be ready to depart. But, I must have my wife to take with me, or there will be war. Deadwood Dick can be threatened, that is nothing; but to turn him, that is another matter altogether. It begins to dawn upon me that perhaps there is something here that will bear looking into a little."

"From the tone of the note, though, it will be at the peril of your wife to do so," reminded the sport.

"True enough; but, as no assurance is given that my wife will be restored to me if I do go away, you can bet your dollars I am not going without her."

Just then a woman of queenly bearing came down the long room toward them, and at sight of her Dick asked:

"Tell me, who is that?"

"That?" said the sport, leisurely turning his head to look. "That is Queen of Hearts, who runs this place."

"Oh, that is it, eh? The Palace is managed by a woman, then? She has been out of town, I take it, and just returned, is taking a survey of her palace."

Stacey looked at Dick sharply, his steely eyes seemingly trying to read him through!

"What are you trying to get at?" he asked.

Dick saw there was something wrong, and did not reveal what he might have disclosed.

He had noted something in particular about this woman, and believed at first he recognized her. He was not sure yet that he hadn't.

"Why, merely a remark, seeing the close survey she is taking of everything and everybody," Dick passed it off, easily. "She is a handsome, dashing woman, to judge at first blush."

"Oh, that is all," the sport as easily accepted.

"I thought you were going to say you had seen the Queen abroad lately. She has not been away from here in several months, so far as I am aware, and I am here nearly every night. Ha! there is a youngster who is stuck on her."

But, for Dick's suspicion. He remembered the veiled woman who had come by the stage, and whose face he had seen in part at the table later. Her lips and chin were identical with those of this Queen of Hearts. At first he had felt sure it was the same person.

This woman had a beauty that was almost dazzling, and if there was only one man in the room who was "stuck" on her, Dick regarded it as wonderful.

He looked where the sport indicated, and saw a rather good-looking young man in the act of lifting his hat and bowing to the woman. She gave him a smile of recognition as she passed him.

She came on, and as she neared the table where the mayor, the sport and Dick were seated, she inclined her head in recognition of the sport, the mayor, or both.

Stacey partly rose.

"Queen of Hearts," he said, "if you will take the trouble to step here I will introduce a gentleman of whom you must have heard."

The woman came up with a smile and easy grace, her brilliant eyes fixed upon Deadwood Dick.

"Whom is it I am to have the honor of greeting?" she asked.

"Let me introduce Mr. Richard Bristol, who is better known as Deadwood Dick, Junior," said Stacey. "Mr. Bristol, I present you to the proprietress of this saloon, Queen of Hearts."

Dick rose and acknowledged the introduction with his usual grace.

"Indeed!" the woman exclaimed. "Is it possible my place is honored by the presence of Deadwood Dick? Allow me to welcome you to Basalt Butte, sir. I am glad I can welcome you as a friend, for I have heard so much about you that I should dread to have you for a foe."

She had extended her hand while speaking, and Dick had touched it with a light momentary grasp.

"Have we not met before, madam?" he asked.

For an instant she looked as if a startled expression would come to her face, but a smile banished it instantly.

"Not to my knowledge, sir," she answered.

"Where do you think you have seen me? Perhaps I can soon settle the doubt in your mind."

Dick gave a slight shrug of the shoulders.

"Impossible to say, now," he declared. "I am going and coming all the time, and it is impossible to retain all the faces I meet. May as well let it pass as unsaid. I suppose you know all about my great loss, and the unaccountable disappearance."

"Yes; everybody knows it. You have my sympathy, sir, and if I can aid you in any manner whatever, you have only to command me. Perhaps you may think of some part which I can play, when you begin your search in earnest—for I have already heard the rumor that she is not dead—"

"Great storm-king!" suddenly broke out the mayor, and he brought his huge fist down upon the table with a crash. "Take me out and club me to death for a blamed old ringtonged and spavined jackass! Why didn't I think of it afore? I hev et now, an' I'm bettin' on et. Deadwood Dick, yer enemy is Red Roy, ther outlaw!"

CHAPTER V.

DICK LEARNS ABOUT THE OREGON OUTLAW.

DEADWOOD DICK looked at the mayor in a questioning way. Here was a candidate for prison of whom he had never heard, and he was eager to learn more. Handsome Harry, too, looked at Mr. Grimm for a moment, and then at Dick, and his eyes and those of the detective met. The Queen of Hearts looked from one to another of the trio, her smile still upon her lips. The mayor, with fist still clinched, was gazing at Dick, as if only waiting to be questioned. The pause was only momentary, when Dick inquired:

"And who is this Red Roy of whom you speak, Mayor Grimm? I believe I have never heard of the gentleman before."

"Who is Red Roy? He's ther durndest thief that ever sot foot in these parts, that's who he is. But, he hasn't been seen in some time, and I s'pose that's ther reason I didn't think of him afore."

"That must be it," decided Handsome Harry. "It never occurred to me, either, and I guess no one else thought of him in connection with this mystery. How came you to think of him now, mayor? It seemed to strike you all of a sudden."

"Durn me ef I know," was the response. "Et popped inter my head jest then, and I spoke right out in meetin', so ter say. What do ye think of ther idee, Queen o' Hearts? You are a clever one at gittin' at facts. What's yer opine on this hyer question?"

"It may be as you think," was the smiling response, "but, who can say? As Mr. Bristol has never heard of him, suppose you tell him all about the fellow, and let him judge for himself. You will excuse me?"

With that, and a bow to all, she passed on down the room.

Dick looked after her a moment, then turned his attention to the mayor, ready to hear his story.

"Et ain't much ter tell," the mayor said at once. "Ther few facts kin be summed up in short meter, as ther poicks say. This Red Roy is said ter be from Oregon way, and has been called ther Oregon Outlaw. He is a outlaw sure enough, no doubtin' that pint. Never heard of him, hey?"

"Never," answered Dick. "He can't have made much of a reputation yet, or my attention would have been called to him ere this. But, go on with your story."

"I don't know about that part of et, but if he goes on as he commenced 'round hyer he will make et fast enough, you bet. But, it's three months sence he was seen hyer, and that's why he was sort of out o' mind. He is a feller dressed all in red, even to his shirt and boots, and he's a darin' cuss, afeerd of nothin'. He made his first 'pearance hyer one pay-day, and ridin' up to ther mine office, stepped in, collared ther boodle, went out and mounted his boss and was off, and ther boys pitchin' lead at him fer all they was worth."

"A cool customer, then, I should say."

"No name fer him. Ther next thing he did was ter stop ther extra stage one day, when it had ther biggest shipment aboard that had been made from hyer—bullion, I mean; and darn me ef he didn't dump ther hull lot of et and send ther stage on empty. What he done with et nobody knows, but et disappeared, and so did he, and he hasn't been seen 'round hyer sence. As I said, that was about three months ago, so ye see it has sort o' died out o' mind; but et hits me right in ther gizzard that this same Red Roy is

at ther bottom of this hyer mystery, though just how is more'n I am goin' ter explain. Now, thar ye have ther hull facts of ther case; what do ye think of et?"

"There may be something in it," Dick said, thoughtfully.

"It is strange no one thought of it before," mused the sport. "This, it appears to me, would account for the letter you have received, Mr. Bristol."

"What I was just thinking," agreed Dick. "This outlaw may be around yet, and learning my identity and inferring perhaps that I was after him, has meant to nip my game in the bud."

"It looks reasonable, certainly. What are you going to do about it? How do you think you will take his warning?"

"Et looks ter me as if he has ye in a bad box," observed the mayor.

"You are right," agreed Dick. "He holds the best hand. If it is as you now think, and it looks reasonable, he has me at a disadvantage. I will do anything to get my wife out of his power. But, the mystery! How on earth did she disappear from that cliff?"

The others shook their heads. They simply gave it up.

"I can do nothing," Dick went on, "but simply await the pleasure of my unknown foe. If he had made it possible for me to respond to his letter, I would do so, and try to come to terms with him; as it is I am helpless. His letter is a peculiar one. He certainly knows me and something of my reputation. He holds the strongest possible trump in his hand—the life of my wife. He gives me forty-eight hours in which to make myself scarce—as it were, and says I am to receive no further warning, but my wife's head will pay the forfeit if I do not go. He has got me in a bad fix, as the mayor here has said."

"Darn me ef he ain't, and no mistake," the mayor agreed. "He don't give ye no chance ter speak up, either, and don't say what will become of yer wife anyhow. Et ain't hardly a square deal, by ther livin' Jupiter et ain't!"

"I suppose you are going to back me, if it comes to a struggle, are you not?" Dick asked.

"Wull, now, ye kin bet yer life on't!" cried the mayor. "Me childrun and me'll jest stand up with ye till ther bell rings, I should cough up a cat or two ef we won't."

"And you may count upon my help, too," offered the sport. "If you get hold of the case in the right shape, and there is anything I can do to help you, you have only to direct me and it's done. The mayor here knows what sort of fellow I am, and he will tell you I'm always as good as my word."

"So I've allus found ye," the mayor at once testified.

"Were it not for one thing," mused Dick, "I would demand a thorough search of every shanty in the camp this hour."

"By ther great storm king! Say only ther word, Deadwood Dick, and et shell be done right off soon. I'm mayor of this hyer city, and my word is law."

"No, it need not be done," Dick decided. "My wife's assurance that for the present she is safe, is enough. I can wait. Besides, such a proceeding might make her position more dangerous."

"Wull, wull, meebby you aire right. When ye want us ter pitch in, jest say so, an' we're ready."

The Queen of Hearts had made her way to the end of the room by this time, and had stopped to speak to persons here and there, and was now coming back again toward the rear.

"Well, you have heard the story of Red Roy?" she interrogated, stopping for a moment at the table where Dick sat, resting her hand on the back of his chair.

"Yes; and it leads me to suspect that possibly he is the foe with whom I have to deal," Dick answered.

"You may be right. It is to be hoped you will down him, if it is so. Where can he have been keeping himself these three months, I wonder?"

"You say it is three months since he was here?"

"About that long, sir."

"Strange, then, if he has reappeared just at this time! Oh! there is much in this to baffle me. I cannot grasp it at all. Silent three months, and yet ready for me when I came here by chance, without any knowledge whatever of his existence. I give it up."

"It certainly is strange," the woman agreed.

"But, it is Deadwood Dick with whom he has to deal, if it is Red Roy, and he will probably find he has crossed swords with a formidable

antagonist. Whatever the mystery is, however, and whoever the foe, count upon me when the time comes when I can help you."

Dick thanked her, and she passed on.

"By the way," Dick then changed the subject, turning to the mayor, "can you tell me the name of that young man over there, the one who seems to be all gone in his admiration of the Queen of Hearts?"

"Sartain," was the ready answer. "He sails under the name of Walt Thornton. I guess that's his sure-enough handle, fer I don't see what he would want of more'n one name."

"What do you know about him?"

Dick dividing his glance between the mayor and the sport, this question was to either or both of them.

"Not much of anything," the sport replied. "Seems like a quiet sort of lad, but he is bad stuck on the Queen, and no getting over that."

While they were talking thus, Dick noted another personage who had entered the saloon, and who was walking leisurely down the long room toward the rear, casting glances this way and that as though in search of some one.

It was the man who had come by the stage, the one with the tufts before his ears, Mr. Henry Whipple.

While Dick watched him his eyes fell upon the young man called Walt Thornton, and he gave a slight start of recognition.

He fixed his gaze upon the man for some seconds, the latter being seated so that he could not observe the close attention he was receiving.

The man passed on to the end of the room, taking what seemed to be a lazy and natural survey of the finest place in the camp, and returning, took a seat just across from Thornton.

"You are not watching him for nothing, and I know it," thought Dick, at the same time carrying on his conversation with his companions of the hour. "You mean something, and I have an idea it will pay me to watch you a little."

His queries having been answered, and all interest in Walt Thornton being at an end, apparently, Dick and the others turned again to their own table to resume their smoke and talk, when Dick made a discovery that caused him a start. Right in front of him, on the table, lay another sealed letter.

He caught it up quickly and looked at it.

"What have you there?" asked Stacey.

"Another message, by the great storm-king!" cried the mayor.

"This is getting decidedly interesting," observed Dick, with a smile. "Can either of you tell how this came here?"

"Durn me ef I seen et come," declared the mayor.

"Nor I," quickly added the sport. "It is growing decidedly too interesting, I should say. Who is it from this time?"

Dick had been scanning the crowd, trying to fix suspicion upon some one, but it seemed impossible to do so. He gave that up as useless, and looked at the letter.

The envelope was directed to him, in the same masculine hand as before, and opening it, the note within was found to be written in the same hand. Answering the sport's question, Dick read it.

It ran as follows:

"DEADWOOD DICK:—

"Since writing my other note to you I have thought perhaps I was not giving you a fair chance to have a say in the matter. I will meet you personally, to talk the matter over with you. Think the matter over well, and have your mind fully made up. You know whom from."

Dick tossed the note away with an impatient jerk.

"This is getting tiresome," he cried. "Read it, Mr. Stacey, and say what you think of it. Read it aloud, so the mayor can hear. I should have done so myself, but acted upon impulse in throwing it from me with the disgust I felt."

CHAPTER VI.

TELLS WHAT BECAME OF THE MISSING WOMAN

Two and two make four. This simple truth is patent to everybody who ever took the trouble to prove it. Hence, when a man in red was introduced in the very beginning of our story, and later on a certain Red Roy, outlaw, was described by the mayor of Basalt Butte, the reader simply added two and two and got at a certain fact. That is to say, it was readily guessed that the man on the cliff at the time of the almost tragedy, and this Red Roy, were one and the same; and that Kodak Kate was in his power. Further, that it was he who had sent the two puzzling messages to Deadwood Dick.

It was even so.

Let us return to the time of the exciting run-away.

When the man in red turned his attention to the woman in his arms, after witnessing the terrible leap of the horse off into the depth, she was just making an effort to free herself from his arms. Her rapid breath fanned upon his cheek, her eyes met his, and she was about to speak when—

It was at that point we saw fit to break off and tell of something else, which, in the order of events, seemed to demand precedence.

It was at that moment the man in red heard the strokes of other hoofs, and to remain where he was for a moment longer meant discovery, which was something he was not prepared for then.

With a quick movement he threw his weight sideways against the rock, and in an instant he and the woman disappeared from view, the rock door closing after them with a cushioned jar, or thud, and all around was utter darkness. It was a transition so sudden that the woman was denied all chance to resist.

She was, too, for the moment dazed and powerless with her surprise, and in the same interval the man clapped his hand over her mouth, lifted her in his arms, and bore her away as though she were but a child.

At this her power of action suddenly returned, and she struggled desperately to free herself, but all in vain, and in spite of her struggles she was carried rapidly away along a dark, cold passage, finally emerging into a part of the cavern where a light burned.

It was here the man put her on her feet and released her.

Instantly, and with a quickness that evidently surprised the man, she leaped back from him, and a revolver covered his breast.

"You wretch!" she cried. "Though you have saved my life, you have forfeited all the thanks I owed you! Take me back to the trail at once, or I will kill you where you stand!"

Recovering from his momentary surprise, the man laughed lightly, folding his arms and looking at the woman with curiosity.

"Well, well," he mused, "but you are a perfect little Tartar, sure enough. I hope you won't waste any powder and lead on me, my dear; I'm not worthy of it."

"You may find that you have caught a Tartar," Kodak Kate cried, warningly, "if you do not immediately obey me. Take me back at once to the place where we met, or I fire."

"Well, now, before you shoot, let's reason a moment," the man in red proposed, as coolly as though no danger threatened him. "I am not easily frightened, as perhaps you see. Suppose you kill me, what will you do then? You could never find your way out of here!"

Kodak Kate was pale, but she was also firm, and held her aim at the man's heart with a steady hand.

"I do not mean to kill you, if you take me back at once," she said. "If you refuse, the worse for you. I mean what I say."

"I don't doubt it in the least, fair lady," was the response. "When I inform you that it is impossible for me to comply with your request, however, you will see that threats will avail nothing."

"You refuse, then?"

"By the grim necessities of the case I must refuse."

"You will regret it. I have friends near at hand, who will avenge this indignity."

The man in red laughed again.

"Your friends," he said, "are as powerless to aid you as though they were at the antipodes. They are no doubt looking for you in the bottom of the gulch, where the carcass of your horse now lies."

"Heavens! You must set me free, sir, and at once! My husband will go mad! For Heaven's sake, show me the way out!"

"Ha! a married lady, eh? No doubt it was your husband who was coming after you at the time of our disappearance. Ha! ha! This will give him something to puzzle his brains over for a time—"

"Villain!" cried Kate, almost beside herself. "I have warned you for the last time. Take me back at once, or as sure as you stand there I will shoot you, even though you did save my life. Come, at once, sir, or I fire!"

"Well, fire a ray, since that seems to be your desire. Let us see if you have the nerve to shoot a man, anyhow."

"Do you mean to refuse me?"

"Why, I have refused already. What more can I say?"

It was a test of nerve power, and those of the

woman were strained to the last degree, evidently.

Still she remained steady in her aim, remembering advice that had been impressed upon her mind time and again by her husband, that the "drop" was everything, and she had it.

"Your blood be on your head, then," she cried in her last desperate degree of calmness. "Unless you obey me at once, sir, I fire."

"Fire away, then. Red Roy, the outlaw, takes no orders from men, and certainly not from a woman. Fire away, I say, and let's have it done with."

Driven to it, knowing it would not do for her to back down, Kate did fire, but not to kill.

What was her surprise to find the man still smiling before her, as though he had not been touched and had no dread of bullets.

He stepped toward her now, still smiling.

"Back!" she cried. "Take one step more and I shoot to kill!"

He advanced, still smiling, as, in spite of the half-mask he wore, could be plainly seen; and in desperation Kate aimed and fired full at his breast.

Finding herself in his power, believing his intentions were full of evil for her, she felt herself justified in the act.

What was her dismay, though, to find him still before her, smiling as ever, and apparently unharmed.

Her arm dropped, as she stared at him in surprise, if not indeed in dismay, and the next moment he sprung upon her and snatched the weapon out of her hand.

"You are too handy with the revolver," he observed, coolly. "I will take it away from you before you do some mischief. You have had your little satisfaction, now let me have mine."

She drew back, struggling to get away.

"It is of no use," the man in red declared.

"You are as nothing in my grasp. I want the satisfaction of proving to you how helpless you are. I intend you no harm, so do not be uneasy on that score. Only for my own safety, I would not have brought you here. Let us have a little talk."

"I desire to have nothing to say to you," Kate panted. "I demand my freedom, and that at once. Let me go, and you are forgiven; detain me here another minute, and you will regret it bitterly. I am making no idle boast. If I could not kill you, there is one who can and will bring you to account."

"Oh, I have no doubt of it; but, then, that is afar off, and does not trouble me greatly."

"You misunderstand me, sir. I do not refer to any Hereafter, but to the time present. My husband will hunt you down if it takes a year."

"And who is this husband of yours, whom you seem to think is such a terrible fellow?"

"You will find that out soon enough to satisfy you, I think."

Kate's spirit was now returning.

"Then you have no intention of revealing your identity to me," the man made observation.

"I have not, sir. You have shown yourself to be a rascal and villain, and have admitted that you are an outlaw. I want nothing more to say to you."

"Oh, but that won't do, you know. You are helpless here, and could never get out of this hole without my help, never. If you had killed me you would die here just as sure as you are alive now."

"Perhaps that fate were preferable."

"Oh, not by any means, I assure you. Now, if you are disposed to listen to reason I will tell you what I purpose doing."

Kate said nothing.

"In the first place," the man resumed, "it was for my own safety that I acted as I did and brought you here. Your sudden coming surprised me, and I had no time to get out of sight, or I would have been out of sight when you appeared. Then where would you be now? Seeing your danger, I was prompted to save you, and acted accordingly. The next moment I heard another horse coming, and in order not to be found, made my exit from the scene, taking you with me."

Kodak Kate still made no comment.

"You will understand," the outlaw went on, "that I desire to keep my presence here a secret. Now, I think we can come to an understanding that will be perfectly satisfactory to us both. As I have said, I mean you no harm. You have seen that threats and blows avail you nothing. Let us come to a reasonable understanding. I know not who you are, and little care. You owe your life to me, and I think you will be willing to agree to what I am going to propose. You must remain here till night, when, on con-

dition that you promise not to reveal what you know concerning Red Roy and his secret den, I will set you free and see that you reach the camp safely."

Kate was still silent.

"Well, what do you say?" the man in red urged.

"I must refuse your terms," was the answer, boldly spoken. "When I get out of your power it is my intention to tell where I have been, and all about you and your secret hiding-place."

"Whew!" the man whistled. "That is the kind of a beauty you are, is it? If that is the case I am afraid you will remain here an indefinite time. Red Roy is not the man to be trifled with, I assure you of that."

"Nor am I a woman to make a promise which I would break immediately upon regaining my liberty," was Kate's spirited retort.

"Then the fact that I saved your life goes for nothing, eh?"

"I am not so sure that I would have been killed, sir. I certainly would not have accompanied my horse over that cliff, let the result of a leap from its back have been what it might."

"You say so now, but you would never have thought of it if it had not been for me."

"You are wrong, sir. It was a decision I made immediately upon seeing my danger."

"Well, well, that is past now. It is the present that claims our attention. You are in my power, and unless you pledge your word not to reveal my secret you must remain here. But, this is the most uncomfortable part of my secret home. Come, let me conduct you to my parlor, where we can talk the matter over at our ease and leisure."

CHAPTER VII.

KODAK KATE IN THE OUTLAW'S RETREAT.

KODAK KATE had by this time come to realize that she was in a serious dilemma, indeed. In an unknown cavern, in the power of a man who knew not fear, and upon whom bullets had no effect, she was about helpless. But, she was a woman of bravery and great coolness, and her presence of mind did not desert her for a moment. Many another would have given way to tears.

"Very well, sir," she responded to the proposition just made. "Since I am to be your guest whether I would or not, lead on. It is truly a cheerless spot here."

"Bravely spoken," Red Roy complimented. "This way, if you please, madam; and you may precede me. I will direct you as needed."

He indicated the direction, and having removed the light from its place, he held it aloft in his hand to light the way.

Kate went along a passage that seemed to be a natural crack in the solid rock.

The trend was downward, and presently a word of caution from the man in red gave her warning of a chasm near at hand.

This was reached, and for some distance the way was narrow and dangerous. It was passed over in safety, however, and then came a flight of rude steps cut in the side of the chasm.

Here a rope ran along the side, fastened at short spans, and taking hold of them as directed, Kate went bravely forward, and after a descent that seemed never ending, finally reached the bottom, where the cavern widened, and where, in the distance, another light was seen.

"Bravely done!" cried Red Roy. "Not one woman in fifty would have come down that dangerous passage without a word of fear. You have aroused my curiosity to the highest pitch to learn who you are, madam."

"No matter who I am," was the cold response. "Which way now, Sir Outlaw?"

"Straight ahead toward yonder light, Madam Fearless," was the direction. "We are nearly at the end of our journey now."

"I am not sorry. I only hope I am so much nearer freedom."

"Your freedom will depend solely upon yourself, lady. But, we will talk of that when we come to our destination."

Kate went forward with a fearless air, though not without some natural misgivings, and ere long came to the point where a lamp was suspended from the roof of the rock passage.

Behind the lamp was a heavy red curtain, in two parts, suspended from a rod and falling in rich folds to the ground. Stepping forward to this, the man in red drew it apart in the middle, and with a wave of the hand, said:

"Enter, fair guest, and make yourself at home."

For a moment Kodak Kate was dazed by what she saw, and hesitated.

Before her opened a vista as grand as it was strange and unexpected. There was a long *salon*, in the center of which hung a brilliant chandelier. It was richly furnished and carpeted, and the ceiling and walls were hung with heavy red cloth.

Red was the predominating color, and it was set off to the highest degree of elegance with white and gold. The furniture was heavy, rich and costly; handsome pictures adorned the walls, and everything was in keeping. It looked like some Parisian *salon*, or a scene out of Fairyland.

Here the air was warm and pure, and altogether it was an inviting place after the cold, dismal way that had just been left behind.

"Enter, Lady Incognita," the outlaw again invited. "Here you will find comfort, even though a prisoner, and here we can finish our conversation. You need not hesitate."

Kate stepped forward into the place, the man following, letting the heavy curtain drop to its place behind him.

"Welcome to the home of Red Roy," he said. "Take a seat and be as comfortable as possible. Remember, you are here as a guest, for the present, and no harm shall come to you."

"As a most unwilling guest, you must remember, sir," Kate reminded. "If I sit down, it is not because I willingly accept your invitation, but because I am tired. Let us have an understanding as soon as possible, if you please."

She sat down, and the man in red dropped upon a chair facing her.

"From what you have said," spoke he, "I fear our understanding can mean but one thing for you, and that is, imprisonment here for the present. It is not my will to hold you, but if you oblige me to do so, I shall not hesitate. Now, are you willing to reveal your identity to me?"

"I am not. You need not ask that."

"It matters little. A visit to the camp will reveal that, for no doubt your husband will make himself known."

"I certainly shall not do so."

"All right. Now, one thing more: In order to regain your liberty, will you pledge yourself to keep secret what you know about me and my place of hiding?"

"I will not, as I have already told you," was the undaunted reply. "When I get away from here I will make known everything. I feel that I am under no obligations to you."

"Not for your life?"

"I would have leaped from my horse, anyhow."

"So you said before. It is unfortunate that I had to bring you here."

"You need not have done so. You might have left me on the cliff, disappearing yourself."

"And leave you to tell of the mysterious man in red who had rescued you, and who had disappeared in the solid wall? Oh, no."

Kate remained silent.

"I knew better than that," the man in red went on. "I would not have it known where the upper exit of this cavern is. With swift calculation I resolved upon my plan of action, never doubting but you would take the pledge of secrecy upon yourself in order to regain your liberty as soon as possible. That is all you have to do, lady, and I am willing to accept your word in the matter."

"I will not pledge myself, for the reason I have given," was Kate's determined return.

"Then there is only one thing for me to do, and that is, to hold you here. I will leave you now, and go to learn something about you. By the time I return you may have changed your mind."

"Do not count upon that, sir."

"Well, it matters little to me whether you do or not. If you have to remain here it is your own fault, not mine."

Rising and stepping to the wall, the man pulled a cord.

A few moments later a negress came into the room, at the further end, and advanced.

"Martha," spoke the master of the place, "here is a guest. You will see to her every want while I am absent, and also see to it that she does not escape from here. She is a prisoner, to be plain about it."

"Yes, sah."

"And you, lady, take heed that you do not attempt to get away. You do not know your way in this place, and might get into serious trouble. For your own safety let me urge you not to be foolish enough to be wandering around alone."

"If chance offers, I shall not hesitate to escape."

"It is impossible. I could bind you, but I

will not do that. You are a woman of sense; be sensible in this."

With that, and a bow, the man in red went from the room.

"Now, yo' done heard what he said," spoke the negress. "Better take it easy and not make no trouble, for dat do yo' no-good. Now, what kin old Marfa do fo' you?"

"You can do nothing for me, unless to show me the way out of this place, and of course you will not do that," was Kate's response.

"Yo' have got good sense, gal, to know dat," declared the colored woman, with a grin. "No use yo' askin' dat, nohow. Now, here is a room whar yo' kin be alone if yo' want to."

Stepping to one side of the apartment she drew aside a fold in the red hangings, disclosing a small room beyond.

"But, it ain't likely nobody will bother you heah," the woman continued, "so jes' make yo'self at home. Don't try to get away, though, fo' dat won't be no use, and only get you into trouble. Don't reckon nobody will sturb yo' till de boss returns nohow."

Having declared herself thus, the old negress went back the way she had come, and Kate was left alone to her own reflections.

Her thoughts were anything but pleasant, as can be imagined. She thought of Dick and his anxiety more than of herself and her danger. He would not know what had become of her, and would be almost beside himself, as she believed.

There was no help for it, now, however, and she understood it so. Knowing how useless it would be for her to try to make her escape, she did not undertake it, but remained there, resting herself and preparing for whatever was to follow. There was one thing that gave her consolation, and that was the fact that she was not disarmed.

One weapon had been taken away from her, but she had another, which she had thought it better not to let be known. It might in some other event prove her best friend. She had learned by experience that the man with whom she had to deal was not a coward, and her bullets had had no effect upon him. If it came to another occasion for resort to weapons, she would be ready, and would know something she had not known on the first occasion. This gave her courage.

She examined the place thoroughly, and made herself at home as she had been told to do.

Everything needful for comfort or necessity was there, even to books and music, and after a time the old negress brought her a good supper.

Of this she did not hesitate to partake, for she was hungry, and knew it would be folly for her to refuse to eat. And shortly after she had done she received a visit from her captor.

This time he was not clad in red, except his hat and mask, but wore a loose robe that covered him completely to the floor.

"Well, fair prisoner, how are you passing the time?" he asked.

"Impatiently enough," was the answer. "For how long a time must I remain in your gilded prison?"

"Well, Mrs. Bristol— Ha! that causes you to start, does it? You see I now know who you are. It did depend only upon your giving your promise not to reveal what you know, but now I have to withdraw that offer. It will depend altogether upon what course your husband is willing to take in the matter."

"Does he know where I am?"

"He does not. He is going on like a crazy man. Would you like to send him a line to assure him you are alive?"

"If you grant me that favor it will gladly be taken advantage of. I see you know who I am, so there is no further use for me to try to withhold my identity."

"Not the least, Kodak Kate. In the drawer in the table yonder you will find paper, pen and ink. You may write these words, but nothing more; thus,—'Dick:—I am all right, and for the present safe. Kate.'"

Without hesitation the prisoner took pen and paper and wrote as directed, delivering the note unsealed into the hands of her captor. After that he wrote one himself, and with them left the room, leaving Kate again alone. She now felt easier in mind, for she had no doubt but Dick would get the message somehow.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE NIGHT MEETING—THE MOONLIGHT DUEL.

DEADWOOD DICK, Mayor Grimm, and Harry Stacey remained for some time in conversation

at the Palace Saloon. Dick was no nearer the solution of the mystery, as it seemed, than he had been at first. The only thing he knew more was, that his wife was alive. Yes, one other thing: he knew positively she was in the power of this unknown correspondent. Besides the man's assertion to that effect, all three of the notes had been written on the same kind of paper and sent in similar envelopes.

Dick finally took his leave and went to the hotel.

He was in sore distress of mind. Everything seemed to be working against him, and he had no heart to enter upon the real business that had brought him to the camp.

Throwing himself in a chair in an out-of-the-way corner of the bar-room, he lighted a fresh cigar and tried to fix his thoughts upon the case in which he was more concerned, trying to get hold of some plan for the rescue of his wife.

"I am stumped, utterly," he confessed to himself. "It may be this Red Roy they tell about, but why has he been so long silent? And why has he sprung upon me the moment I come here? And if it was with me he wanted to deal, why did he not go for me and leave Kate alone?"

He thought hard—rather tried so to think.

We know Deadwood Dick. Know him as a cool, keen detective. Yet, he was not by any means infallible.

He had made mistakes more than once, and more than once had his judgment been in error. It was no surprise that a mystery such as this should tax him as it did.

"I must think it out," he said to himself, determinedly. "I came here for the innocent purpose of finding one Gregory Mayham, of informing him of his good fortune, and seeing that he got started off for England all right. Why have I met with such a reception, when no one knew of my coming? It is impossible to solve that, yet. First and most important of all, where is Kate?"

But, why follow his thoughts, when to do so would require a whole chapter or more devoted to nothing else? Suffice it to say that he was little nearer the truth, when he was finally interrupted, than when he had begun.

He had been in his quiet corner something more than an hour, when a man approached him.

"Aire you Mister Deadwood Dick?" the fellow asked.

"That is the name I answer to, sir," Dick made response.

"Then you aire the man I want to see. I hev been told ter fetch ye with me, ef ye would come alone."

"Where do you propose to take me?" Dick asked.

"Jest a leetle ways out of ther town, where a man is waitin' to see ye on 'portant business."

"Very well, I am ready to go with you. Don't think you can lead me into any trap, however, my fine fellow, for I am armed, and will not hesitate a moment about drilling you if I suspect anything crooked."

"Oh, that's all right, boss," he was assured. "I'm only ter take ye to whar t'other man is, and that ends my part in ther business. I know he is thar alone, howsumever, and that et is all right."

"Very well, I'll take your word for it; you take my warning. Lead on."

They went out of the room, and off up the street and out into the gulch along the regular trail.

Finally they came to the place where the narrow ledge branched off that led to the top of the cliff above the town, and there the guide stopped.

Nothing had been said on the way, no word spoken by either, but now as the man stopped and faced around he addressed Dick in language far different from that he had used at first.

"I think this will answer as well as any other place for our interview, Mr. Deadwood Dick," he said. "I am the man who sent for you, acting as my own messenger. I suppose you can now guess who I am."

"I take it for granted you are my unknown correspondent, if that word will apply in a case where it has been all one-sided."

"You are right, sir. I am the person who sent you the notes to which you refer."

"Well, what do you desire to say to me, then, sir?" asked Dick.

"I desire to know what your decision is with regard to what I have already had to say," was the return.

"You, then, are the person who is holding my wife prisoner, are you? You have the advantage of me in that respect. You know I am helpless. What are your terms?"

"Sensibly spoken," cried the unknown. "Yes, I am that person, and my terms, in few words, are these: That you go away from here as soon as possible, no more to return. Your wife will be allowed to follow you two days later, and you may name a place for her to meet you."

"That is liberal, certainly, but I must know more."

"What more would you know?"

"Well, I must have some assurance that my wife will be properly treated in the mean time."

"I give you my promise for that."

"You are unknown to me."

"You will have to take my word, nevertheless. Do you agree to my terms?"

"Well, I must consider further before I accept your liberal offer, sir. What if I do not accept?"

"In that case your wife is as good as dead. You will never see her again, and your own life too will pay the penalty for your rashness."

"Well, now, that is putting it rather strong, I'll be blown if it ain't," Dick observed in his cool way. "Has it occurred to your mind that two can play at the same game?"

"Oh, yes, I have taken all that into consideration; but, when all the trumps are on one side the other fellow doesn't have much of a show, generally."

"Then you will force me to do your bidding."

"Either that, or worse; you may take your choice of the two evils."

"Well, one thing more: who and what are you?"

"You know that already."

"Are you Red Roy, the outlaw?"

"If you think so, all right; it's all the same to me."

Dick felt annoyed at such answers, and at the man's defiant manner. Had it not been that—But, vain regret; Kate was in his power.

"Will you inform me," he asked, holding back his rising rage, "why you have jumped upon me in this manner? I never had heard of such a person as Red Roy at the time of the disappearance of my wife."

"I have taken this course for the purpose of self-protection," was the quiet answer. "I have heard much about Deadwood Dick. I know you to be a relentless hunter of men who evade the law, and I decided at once to take the first step this time and hunt the hunter; do you see?"

"Will you listen to a reasonable proposition?" asked Dick.

"Yes; I am open to anything that will serve my ends. What have you to offer in that way?"

"Restore my wife to me, allow me two days in which to finish my business here, which has nothing whatever to do with Red Roy; and I will take my departure, with the express understanding that I will make no move against you for one month."

"Well, that is refreshing, truly. It is my intention to make you pledge yourself not to molest me at all. Either that, or war at once and to the teeth. In what manner do you prefer to have your wife's head sent to you? Do you want it on a silver dish? Just state your preference."

Deadwood Dick could stand no more.

Whipping out a pair of revolvers, with lightning quickness, he covered the heart of the man before him, crying:

"You infernal rascal! Throw up your hands, or I'll drop you in your tracks where you stand!"

The other only folded his arms on his breast, coolly, and responded:

"Don't get excited, my brave Richard. I know what a hot-head you are, but you are a man of sense at the same time. If you kill me your wife will die of hunger, for no one else knows where she is."

"Then here is another proposition," cried Dick.

"I will fight you, man to man, the victor to win everything. If you kill me, then you will have no reason to fear Deadwood Dick further, and my wife will be a widow and still in your power. On the other hand if I kill you, then the victory is mine."

"That is reasonable enough, but how will you find your wife if you do kill me in the fight?"

"Tell me where she is, and how to get her, before we begin."

"That is reasonable enough, too; but, Richard, I am not ready to pass in my checks yet, and so decline your offer. No; I have this thing all in my own hands, and there I am going to hold it."

"You seem to forget that I have the drop on you."

"Pah! What care I for a trifle like that?"

"It seems our interview is resulting in nothing, so far."

"The fault is yours. Accept my terms and

all will be well. I have heard ever that the word of Deadwood Dick is his bond, with friend and foe alike. Give me your word, and I will carry out my part of the agreement to the letter."

"Never!" cried Dick. "Kate, forgive me, but I am not able to bear more from this insolent knave! Draw your weapon, Red Roy, if that is your name, and defend yourself. I am going to shoot you down unless you do."

"Oh, well, if that is the case, I suppose I shall have to oblige you," said the outlaw, as coolly as ever, and he drew a weapon. "How many paces do you want between us?"

"Stand just where you are!" was Dick's stern command. "We will be timed by the exhausts of that engine over there at the mines. When it has given five puffs we will fire. Does that suit you?"

"Perfectly. Say when you are ready."

"I am ready now. Begin to count with this time:—One—"

The moon was just showing over the hills, and there was plenty of light to assist their aim.

Deadwood Dick certainly meant business, being willing to throw his life in the balance against this rascal who was holding his wife in bondage.

He could have killed the man, as he believed, but that was not his way. He was ever ready to give and take, and believed that the time had not come for his good luck to desert him.

Plainly were heard the exhausts of the steam-engine, and at the fifth one, exactly in time with it, Dick fired, first one weapon and then the other.

He had expected to see the puffs of fire from his opponent's weapons at the same time, and was surprised that he did not. He was more surprised to see him standing before him unharmed.

"Did you not fire too soon?" the man asked.

"Was not that the fourth, instead of fifth? But, no matter; you have had your turn, and now it is mine."

Even with his words, and before Dick understood or could act, there was a flash and a report, and he, Dick, threw up his arms and fell forward upon his face; the other thrusting his weapon into his belt and dashing up the ledge trail at a run.

CHAPTER IX.

DECLARATION OF WAR—THE FRUITLESS SEARCH.

WHEN Deadwood Dick opened his eyes, the morning sun was shining in his face, and its rays had probably had the effect to bring him back to the land of the living. He was chilled to the bone, felt stiff and sore, and his head was aching in a terrific fashion. It took him but a few moments to bring to mind what had happened, but it presently came to him with a rush, and he sat up and looked around. He realized that he had had a narrow call, and putting his hand to his head, where the greatest pain and soreness were felt, found his hair was matted with blood.

"Well, that was a close shave," he said to himself. "About as narrow a miss as I ever experienced, I believe. Well, I suppose I ought to be thankful I'm alive, and so I am. I wonder if the other fellow managed to get away alive?"

Getting upon his feet as soon as his benumbed limbs would permit, he stepped to the spot where his antagonist had stood at the time of the duel, and looked around on the ground for signs of blood.

"Strange," he muttered, "but there isn't a drop of blood here. Now I remember, he didn't appear to mind the bullets at all. What sort of man was he, anyhow?"

Dick was puzzled, and was in no trim to wrestle with the problem just then, so he made his way toward the hotel.

When he entered the street he was the object of many curious glances.

Presently he came face to face with the mayor.

"Great storm-king!" that gentleman cried. "Whar hev you been, Deadwood? Hev ye been on a howlin' rampage with a frisky lion, or somethin' like thet? By ther livin' Jupiter! ye look as though ye had been havin' a sarcus with a cattymount."

Dick smiled in a ghastly way.

"You are about right, generally speaking, mayor," he admitted. "I had a duel on my hands last night, and I got the worst of it. A man can't expect to come out on top every time, you know. Are you going toward the hotel? I must go and right myself up a little."

"I've jest kem from thar, and in truth was goin' ter look fer you. Et has jest been made

down that ye wasn't thar last night, and ther landlord don't know what ter make of et. Come right erlong. Great storm-king! ye must hev had a narrer 'scape, I should judge. Who was et ye tackled, anyhow?"

"I have reason to believe it was Red Roy," answered Dick.

The mayor had turned, and they were now making their way to the Silver Bugle.

"Red Roy! Great storm-king! you don't tell me so. How did yer meet him, and what was et about? Tell me, 'fore I die right hyer."

Dick told what had happened, and by the time he had done they were at their destination.

Here the story had to be repeated.

Dick found that his strength was rapidly returning, the pain in his head was abating, and he began to feel the pangs of hunger.

"What ye want now, is a good, stiff horn o' brandy," suggested the landlord, "and you will be all right in a little while. Let me fix ye up a bracer that will make ye think—"

He had reached for bottle and glass as he spoke, but Dick stopped him with a wave of the hand.

"None of that for me, if you please," he said.

"What! Do ye mean ter say ye don't take et?" cried the mayor. "Great storm-king on ther rampage!"

"Don't take brandy!" echoed the landlord.

"Not a drop," Dick assured. "I have had experience enough with that article to know it is worse than no good, and I'll have none of it. Besides, you ought to know it's bad for a wound. I'll give you double the price for a glass of hot milk."

"Hot milk!"

"That's what I said. It will do the business quicker than your brandy, and no after effects, except for good. If you have got any on tap, just trot it out."

Milk was to be had, and an order sent to the kitchen soon brought a brimming bowl of the steaming article, which Dick quaffed slowly and with keen relish, the others in the room eying him while he did so.

"There," he said, "I feel like a new man already. The good effect has gone clear down to my toes."

Just as he put down the bowl Harry Stacey came into the room.

"Hello!" he cried. "What in creation has happened to you, Bristol?"

"I have been having a round with grim Death, that is all," was the response.

"Well, I should judge you have, by the looks of you, and he must have come pretty near getting in his work on you, too."

"He certainly did. The width of a hair closer, and I would have taken my everlasting sleep, I guess. But, I am worth several dead men yet, and good for another round."

The story had to be repeated yet again.

"Wonderful!" Handsome Harry exclaimed. "Our reasoning was right, then, and it is this outlaw who has again made his appearance here."

"So it seems, and in whose power my wife is. Something has got to be done, now, and no more delay about it. As soon as I get wasted up, and have something to eat we'll begin."

"That's what we will," cried the mayor.

"Me and my childrun stands ready to back ye."

"And I'm ready to keep my agreement," said Handsome Harry. "If you are going to your room, Bristol, and will allow me to go with you, I'll examine your hurt and fix it up for you."

"Thanks for your offer," returned Dick. "Come right along, for that is just what I need."

Together they passed up to Dick's room, leaving the crowd below to speculate upon the strange affair at will, which they did not hesitate to do.

Said the mayor:

"Now, me childrun, thar is goin' ter be a ruction hyer at ther Butte; I feel et in me bones. This hyer Red Roy, ther p'izen scorpion from Oregon way, is hyer, and he has got ter be downed. He has been silent fer three months, and now I s'pect he is goin' ter make things howl. Ef that is his idee, we have got ter go fer him in a way that will make his black hair curl. This Deadwood Dick is in ther right, and it is ther duty of this hyer camp ter help him. How many of ye are willin' ter take sides with him? Don't a man of ye say no, fer ef ye do I'll call ye to 'count mighty sudden; by the great storm-king I will!"

Everybody present agreed with the mayor, and pledged himself to support Deadwood Dick, no matter what came of it.

"And that wife of his has got ter be diskivered," the mayor went on. "We are a set of

dummies ef we can't find whar she is hid, and don't ye furgit that. It's goin' ter be war right up to ther muzzle, now, 'tween this camp and Red Roy, and ther sooner et is declared ther better. By ther livin' Jupiter! I'll post a notice to that effect now while we wait. Landlord, trot out yer pen and ink, and ther biggest sheet of paper ye have got on hand. We'll see how long this hyer high-handed cut-throat will have things his own way. By ther storm-king! I'll let him know that Archibald Grimm is around, and tha he is at ther head of 'fairs hyer."

The landlord made haste to pass out the articles called for, and the mayor set to work to write a notice.

When he had done, this was the result:

"NOTICE!

"DECLURASHUN OF WAR!

"This is to proclame war against the outlaw Red Roy, and he is by this noticed that he had better git up and git! We, the people of Basalt Butte, mean blz, and if he is ketch'd he has fair warin' that a rope and a lim' will be his fate."

"By all the power in me vest'd,
"ARCHIBALD GRIMM, Mayor."

"Thar!" the mayor cried proudly, as he held his work up to view. "I think et is plain and right to ther p'int, don't you, me childrun? Now, whar am I goin' ter put et up? I think ther front of ther post-office is about ther right place, don't you? We'll see what ther cuss will do about et now."

His "childrun" agreeing that the poster was about the proper thing, and the post-office the proper place for it, the mayor went out to put it up.

Meanwhile, Dick and Handsome Harry, in Dick's room, were at work attending to the wound Dick had received.

The blood had been washed out of his hair, and the wound disclosed. It proved to be less serious than the amount of lost blood indicated. The ball had struck the rim of his hat, and had grazed the side of his head above the ear, tearing the scalp and rendering him insensible. The bone was not injured.

"It was a close summons," declared Harry, when he had examined it. "There is an ugly lump here, but the damage is not great, and your hair will hide the scar when it has healed up."

"Can you patch it up, do you think?" Dick asked.

"Oh, yes, that is easily done. Give me five minutes at it, and I'll do a good job for you."

Dick allowed him to go ahead, and in less than the time named the work was done. Then after a final washing up, Dick went down to breakfast.

His glass of hot milk had done its work by this time, and was almost himself again. The stiffness was out of his limbs, the pain in his head has ceased, and he was almost as good as new.

After breakfast he rejoined the mayor and Stacey in the bar-room.

"Well, Richard is himself again," he announced. "Now, let us set to work and do something. You have pledged me your help in this matter."

"And we mean et, too," the mayor again assured. "Jest say what is ter be did, and we'll git right up and do et. I have already issued a declaration of war 'gainst the cuss, and we'll begin et right off."

The excitement in the camp was great, and by this time there was a great crowd in the hotel and on the street in front.

Everybody seemed eager to do the bidding of the mayor, and he only waited for Dick to direct what should be done. The mayor's "Declurashun" had awakened folks up.

"Well," said Dick, as they stepped out to the piazza, "the first and most important thing of all is to discover and rescue my wife. It is plain enough that she is in this camp or very close by."

"That's so. How shall we go about et?"

"Is it asking too much to have a thorough search made, not missing a single house, cabin or shanty in the whole camp?"

"Not a tall, that's what we'll do. Do ye hear, me childrun? Every hole and corner in this hyer camp has got ter be searched, and I call upon you ter do et."

It was soon begun in a systematic way.

Several hundred citizens went out to the extreme west of the camp and began to move eastward. They made their search a thorough one, and missed not a single house or room anywhere.

Finally, when they came together at the eastern limit of the camp, where the mayor,

Dick, Harry and others awaited them, their verdict was plainly read in each face. Their hunt had resulted in nothing, except to prove that Kodah Kate was not in the camp.

But, it did not stop here. The men spread out, and searched once more every foot of the country within a half-mile circle. It was without avail, however, for the hiding-place of the wily outlaw was not found, nor any clew that was likely to lead to it. Deadwood Dick was completely baffled, and was almost in despair. And no wonder.

CHAPTER X.

VAIN EFFORTS—FAILURE—WORSE DILEMMA.

KODAH KATE, in her elegant prison, to return to the previous night again, experienced some relief in mind after she had been permitted to send to Dick the brief note she had been allowed to pen. It would inform him that she was alive, and that, she knew, would be everything. Besides, it would give him a chance to get a clew to her whereabouts, for she doubted not but he would be able to detect the deliverer of the message and so entrap him, or follow him when he returned to the cavern. But, that aside, it was a relief to have been able to assure Dick she was not dead.

She made no effort to escape, for she knew without trying how futile it would be. She had seen enough of Red Roy to understand the kind of man he was. He had said she could never get out of the cavern, and she believed it.

Being armed, in spite of the fact that one weapon had been taken from her, as we have seen, she had no fear, and there was nothing she could do but patiently await the time of her rescue.

Selecting a book, she sat down to read, hoping thus to wear away the time the more rapidly, but she found it impossible to fix her thoughts upon it.

Putting it away, after a time, she paced the floor to and fro.

The thought of remaining all night in this unknown place began to have new terrors for her, and schemes for escaping began to find place in her mind.

Armed as she was, would it not be possible for her to force the old negress to show her the way out, under threat of killing her if she did not do so? Was it not worth the trying?

But, that would not do, as she immediately reasoned. She certainly would not kill the old woman, and failing to move her by threats she could do no more, and would then have let out the fact that she was armed. That would not do.

No; that would not do, decidedly. Whatever action she took, it must preclude the chance of failure, or it was a failure before undertaken. Perhaps it would be possible for her to find her way out of the cavern. Had she not wasted too much time already? She became active immediately.

Crossing the room to that end where she had first entered, she drew back the curtain and stepped out into the dark passage. No light was there now, as there had been at the time of her coming. That, however, did not check her in her determined course. The light from the red room showed her the lamp, and she lighted it.

Looking all around, and listening attentively, she made sure that no one was near, and set forth up the dark, dismal passage, following the direction from which she had been brought by the man in red earlier in the day.

She had a watch, and knew by the hour that the evening was advanced, and of course it was now dark without. She cared nothing for that; in fact, it rather favored her scheme.

Once let her get out of the cavern, and she would somehow make her way to the camp and find Dick. The only difficulty was the getting out.

And that was a most serious one, as she had yet to learn. Red Roy had not spoken idly.

Presently she came to the rude stairs, and fearlessly began the dangerous ascent, holding her light above her head with one hand, while with the other she clung to the rope that ran along the wall.

The top was reached, and thence she proceeded along the further way until at last the passage ended and she could go no further. It must be here, she reasoned, as she looked around, that she had been brought in, but where was the door? None was to be seen, nor sign of one.

She searched carefully, hoping to find out the secret, but in vain.

There were some cracks and seams in the rocks at the end of the passage, but try them as she would the rock was not to be moved.

She spent fully an hour there, when, chilled and discouraged, she set about retracing her steps in the direction of the red room, where, though a prisoner, she was comfortable.

She made her way safely down, and at length came to the red room.

There, seated comfortably and reading, she found Red Roy, with his hat and red mask on as on the other occasions.

He rose when she entered, and made her a bow.

"Ah! you have returned, I see," he said. "I should have set out to find you had you not put in an appearance soon. You have been exploring the cavern, I suppose. A cheerless place, is it not?"

"I have been seeking some means of escape, sir," was the defiant answer. "I am determined not to spend the night here if I can help it. Are you still resolved to hold me a prisoner?"

"I am, Mrs. Bristol; there is no help for it. I hope your husband will soon pay heed to my terms, and then you will be allowed to depart."

"You do not know Deadwood Dick, sir, nor do you know me, yet. I will leave this cavern this night."

"I cannot agree with you on that point, Mrs. Bristol. There is no means by which you can effect your escape. Perhaps you observed something of the hopelessness of that during your excursion just now."

"Wretch! you will taunt me till you make me do something desperate."

"I hope not, truly."

"By what right do you hold me here, sir?"

"The right of self-protection, dear lady. That is the first law, you know."

"That is no right. I demand again, sir, to be conducted from this place and set at liberty. Will you lead me out?"

"Not this evening, Lady Deadwood Dick."

"You will regret it if you do not, sir. I am determined to leave here."

"So you have said before, but you are still here. You might have earned your liberty, before I learned who you are; but now it is too late, and your fate depends on the action taken by your husband."

"You mean to defy me, then?"

"I would not express it that way, madam. I merely inform you of the situation as it now is."

Kate whipped her revolver from under a fold in her dress, and aimed it full at the man's head.

He gave a start, and made a move as though to spring at her.

"Hold!" she cried. "Make a single move to approach me, and you are a dead man."

Leaning back again on his chair, he laughed lightly, and exclaimed:

"What! did you not learn once before that bullets can take no effect upon me? Why will you play with me in this fashion?"

"I think a bullet aimed at your throat, which is exposed to view fully, will have some effect," was Kate's retort. "I command you to get up and lead me out of this place at once."

Red Roy exhibited as little fear as though positive the woman before him was not in earnest.

"Sorry I can't oblige you," he said, "but so it is. Now don't be foolish enough to waste any more lead upon me."

"As sure as you live this minute," cried Kate, sternly, "I will shoot you if you do not get up and obey me. I have the drop, and will use it."

"May as well be shot as to allow you to escape," was the response. "Shoot me if you must, but if you do that you are doomed to starve to death here, for no one else knows the way out but me."

"I am going to take the chances of that, sir. I will give you just thirty seconds in which to make up your mind. At the end of that time if you have not agreed to what I demand you must die where you now sit."

With her words she took out her watch and looked at it.

"What folly this is!" said the man, carelessly. "You cannot kill me, cannot even hit me with a bullet."

"I have hit smaller targets than your neck, sir, and at longer distance. Now, I begin to count. Have a care that you give the signal before I say thirty."

"Oh, count away, and when you are ready let drive at me."

"I will do so, as sure as I stand here."

Kate began to count, then, with deliberation and distinctness.

The man in red laid down his book, crossed his legs, put his hands behind his head and leaned back in a lazy manner.

Kodak Kate saw he was defying her, and a

gleam of stern resolve shone in her eyes. She meant to keep her word, for she felt justified in the act. Unless he gave way she would kill him!

She reached twenty in her counting of the seconds, and began on the last ten, but the man before her sat as calmly as at first.

"Twenty-three," she counted, and her revolver came higher, and she took careful aim at the exposed throat; "twenty-four; twenty-five; twenty-six;" and still there was no sign of his moving.

"Twenty-seven," went on the calm, steady voice; "twenty-eight; twenty-nine," and Red Roy closed his eyes, as if inviting the shot; and then—"thir—"

That was not finished. An arm from behind struck Kate's, knocking it up, and the weapon went off, the bullet finding its place somewhere in the ceiling of the red room.

At the same instant a cold tube was pressed behind Kate's ear, and she was warned to drop her weapon or she would die then and there. The turned, with a cry, to find herself covered by a revolver held in the steady hand of a masked woman.

"Drop it, I say," the woman ordered, "or I will drop you."

"Never!" cried Kate, and with a spring backward she made an effort to bring her own weapon into play, but now it was too late.

The man in red had sprung up, and catching her he tore the weapon from her hand and flung her down upon a chair, where she fell back, pale and trembling, now, but more with disappointment and rage than with fear.

"You had a winning hand, then, my fine lady," said Red Roy, "but you did not play it right. You delayed too long."

"And thank your lucky star that I did not kill you when I entered," hissed the masked woman.

"It is your time of triumph now," answered Kate. "Mine will come, unless you murder me now while I am helpless; and then, Heaven help you!"

"Almost tragic enough for the stage," sneered Red Roy.

"Quite a character for a novel," subjoined the masked woman.

Kate turned her head away from them. It was useless for her to attempt a reply to do justice to her feelings.

"What are we to do with the wild woman, my love?" asked Red Roy, then, of the woman who had come to his help at so timely a moment.

"It would serve her right to take her out and drop her down into the chasm," was the answer. "She has not the good sense to know when she is well off."

"You are right, but that will not do. We will not do that unless as a very last resort. We must give her a keeper, however. Will you go and bring one of Martha's helpers here?"

"Yes, I will. I understand what you intend, and it serves her right."

The masked woman glided silently away over the soft carpet, disappeared, and was absent some minutes.

During her absence Red Roy expressed his dislike to do what had become necessary, but could not do otherwise, seeing the stubborn spirit with which he had to deal.

When the masked woman returned she brought with her a huge negro, one even larger than the Old Martha already introduced, and to her left wrist was coupled the right of Kodak Kate, a pair of handcuffs being used for the purpose.

CHAPTER XI.

DICK'S ASSISTANCE SOUGHT.

DEADWOOD DICK, baffled as shown, was in despair. After the fruitless search he went to his room in the Silver Bugle, in order to be alone to think. For once in his career he was without a hope, almost, and in a case in which he had the keenest personal interest. Where was his wife—the peerless Kodak Kate? It was something—a good deal—to know she was alive, but the mystery of her whereabouts was killing. How had she disappeared so suddenly from that cliff above the camp? And was she in danger of her life, since now it was known to the outlaw who she was? The thought almost drove him mad. But, what could he do? He was helpless.

He recalled what had passed between him and the outlaw on the previous night. Then the outlaw had given him an offer, one which he almost regretted he had not accepted. But, it was now too late. Since they had fought, and the outlaw had come within an ace of taking his life, as had clearly been his intention of doing, it was war between them. Perhaps his wife had

already been killed. In his agony of mind he paced the floor, thinking, thinking. What was he to do? What could he do toward saving her?

It was gall and wormwood for him to have to acknowledge defeat, yet there was no other course open, so far as he could see. Loving his wife as he did, there was no sacrifice too great to have her restored to him. Had it been his own life only that was threatened, himself only who was in danger, then he would have defied them to the death; but it was his wife who was in peril, her life that was in the balance, and he must throw aside everything and accept the terms offered.

Perhaps it was too late. He could not know that. In some way he must communicate with the outlaw and make known that he accepted the terms offered; that he would go away, never to return to take up the trail against Red Roy, on condition that his wife be restored to him unharmed. What else could he do? All his nature was against it, but his love for his wife rose above every other consideration.

And his promise once given must not be broken, either. The word of Deadwood Dick was a thing sacred, and terms such as these made with an outlaw, who appeared likely to become in a short time the terror of the West, would force him to retire from the field for all time. His word given could not be broken, and he could never obey a call that might come for him to pit himself against this very man.

Would Kate approve of that?

That question arose, and knowing her as he did, he believed she would not approve. "Let them do their worst to me," he could hear her say, "but do not make any sort of terms with an outlaw save terms of his surrender. If I am killed, avenge me; but do not let the power of Deadwood Dick be broken."

Dick knew, as well as though he had heard the words actually spoken, this would be Kate's desire, but he could not heed it. Love rose above everything else, and that must be the ruling power. Every other consideration must be cast aside, and Kate's life and safety put first, no matter what the cost, no matter what the consequences. She must be rescued, saved.

Yes, his decision, at last; he must accept the terms. If his wife was still alive, and could be restored to him, he felt nothing else would be his duty. Her life and safety first of all. He would go away, as the outlaw had proposed, and two days later she would be set free and allowed to join him. Then, if Red Roy had kept his word and she had not been harmed, he would keep his and never lift a hand against the rascal.

But, let the outlaw prove false; let it appear that he had not kept his prisoner unharmed; then it were better for him that he had never been born. Deadwood Dick, then, would hunt him to the ends of the earth, and terrible would be the vengeance he would take upon him. Yes, it must be done, Dick decided. He would post a notice, as the mayor had done, since he knew of no other way by which to reach the rascal; and go away to await the result. But, go away and leave his wife in the power of such a man? Could he do that? Ought he—

A knock at the door interrupted his chain of thought.

Opening the door, after wiping away a damp of perspiration that had appeared on his forehead, he found there his landlord.

"Scuse me," said his host, "but that lady that's stoppin' here wants to see you, sir."

"What lady do you mean?" asked Dick.

"Why, ther one what kem by ther stage last night; ther vailed one."

"Oh! Well, all right, where is she? Anything is welcome that will give me a change of thoughts for a moment."

"She's down in ther women's room, sir."

"Tell her I'll be down shortly."

"All right."

Dick made an effort to shake off the feeling to which he had given way, and presently was ready to leave the room.

His grief and anxiety were none the less, but he had a powerful will, and by bringing it to bear could control his emotions. When he left the room, no one could guess his recent agitation.

As he entered the room below, the woman, Anne Parson, rose to greet him.

She still wore her short vail, beneath which only her chin was exposed to view, and that Dick still believed he recognized.

If this woman and the Queen of Hearts at the Palace Saloon were not one and the same, then positively they must be twin sisters, for never had two persons a stronger resemblance.

"You sent for me?" inquired Dick.

"Yes, sir; I sent for you. You are Mr.

Bristol, the detective, are you not? I have been told so."

"I am."

"And you are known as Deadwood Dick?"

"Deadwood Dick, Junior."

"I have heard of you, and I want to see if you will help me in a matter that has brought me to this place."

"To be frank with you, madam, I do not feel like taking hold of any case at present," was Dick's answer. "You must have heard of the trouble that has come upon me."

"No; I have not heard, sir. I have made no friends here, and have not spoken to any one further than necessary. It was not your wife who so mysteriously disappeared just before I came here, was it? I have heard that talked about at table."

"Yes, it was my wife."

"Oh! I am sorry for you. But, it is possible that I can be of use to you in your search for her."

"You?"

"Yes; I meant to speak to you about a certain thing respecting that matter, after stating my own case."

"Heavens!" cried Dick. "If you can put a clew in my hands that will lead to the recovery of my wife, Miss Parson, you will have done me a favor that can never be repaid."

"Well, are you willing to hear what I wanted of you?"

"Yes; and if I find it possible to remain here, and can do anything for you, believe me I will do it."

"To begin with, then, my name is not Parson. I am speaking to you as to a friend now. My true name is Almah Parmiter. I came here in search of a sister, and not so much to find her either, as to find my promised husband, whom she has lured away from me."

"Will you permit me to see your face?" Dick asked.

"I will, sir."

Looking around to make sure they were alone, she lifted her veil.

It was the face of the Queen of Hearts, the woman who managed the Palace Saloon.

"Your sister and you are twins, are you not?" asked Dick.

"We are; but, how did you guess that? You have seen her, then. Where is she, sir, if you know?"

"A woman the very likeness of you is proprietor of the great saloon here, the Palace. Since you tell me you have a twin sister, it must be she, though I would swear that you and Queen of Hearts are one and the same."

"It is she, no doubt of it."

"Well, what do you want me to do, then?"

"I want to find Mr. Gregory Mayham—"

"Gregory Mayham?"

"Yes; do you know him?"

"He is the person I am in quest of myself. Since I have told others I may as well tell you. It was to find Gregory Mayham that I came here."

The woman's face had grown pale.

"You do not mean that—that he is a criminal, that you are after him?" she gasped.

"Oh, no," Dick assured.

"Then why are you after him?"

"You think Deadwood Dick can have but one motive in wanting to find a person, I see."

"Your name naturally suggested the fear that seized me. I will tell you, sir, that it is Gregory Mayham who is my promised husband."

"Have you seen him since you came here?"

"I have not. The truth is, I am afraid to be seen."

"And why afraid to be seen? You must tell me everything, if I am to be of use to you."

"Well, I am afraid of my sister. Heaven forgive me for saying so, but she is a devil, and would not hesitate to do me harm."

"And why should she do you harm?"

"Do you not see? If she loves Gregory Mayham as—as I do, she would kill me rather than lose him."

"Have you reason to believe he loves her more than you?" Dick asked. He was trying to get down to bottom facts in the case.

"No, I have not," was the answer. "I believe he loves me, and me only, but he is being deceived. He thinks Ariel is I, and for that reason has followed her here."

"I see. But, you told me you had not seen him here. How do you know he is here?"

"I do not know it; I only know he followed my sister away, and I followed her to this place."

"You have told me positively she is here; he must be here also."

"Did he not know you had a twin sister?"

"He did not. Ashamed of her, I never told him."

"How came the deception to be played on him? I do not understand that clearly."

"To tell you that, sir, I must tell you the whole story of myself and sister. Do you want to hear that? It may not prove of interest."

"I want to learn more about the matter, now that you have interested me, and particularly since I am interested in this Gregory Mayham. Besides, and most important of all to me, you have said you might be able to give me a clew to the finding of my wife."

CHAPTER XII.

DICK'S ONLY COURSE.

THERE was a moment of silence, after which the young woman began her story, having again dropped her veil over her face. Whether she had spoken the truth or not, it was evident enough that she did not care to be seen.

"My sister and I," she began, "have never been like sisters at all. We are as unlike in everything save appearance as day is unlike night. Many times I have made great sacrifices for her sake, always to be repaid in slights, meaness, and actual injustice and treachery, and worse. Our father died a few years ago, leaving us each an equal share of his property. It was sold, and the money divided between us. A short time later my sister disappeared, taking her money and mine with her, leaving me to get a living as best I could."

"Well, it was while she was absent that I became acquainted with Mr. Mayham. Hoping, almost, that I would never see her again, I never told him I had a sister. I had heard ill reports of her, and was ashamed of her. Since you have seen something of her, you may be able to judge concerning the truth of what I am telling you. The truth it is, Ariel Parmiter is a—devil. And, just here, I will tell you of the suspicion I have. If there is a person here who knows anything concerning your wife, it is she. You smile; but, think it over. You have heard of Red Roy, who is spoken of in connection with your missing wife. If that villain has an ally here, Ariel Parmiter is evil enough to be the person."

At this Dick was suddenly thoughtful.

Here was something he had not thought of before, because there had been nothing to lead his suspicion that way. Now that his attention was drawn toward the Queen of Hearts, new thoughts crowded into his mind.

But there was nothing yet upon which he could fasten. This woman to whose story he was listening was a stranger to him, and he could not be sure she was telling him the truth, though there was some evidence to support it. There was no question about the fact of the relationship between the two.

"Have you more to tell?" Dick asked, the woman having paused.

"Yes, there is more to tell. Shortly after I had become engaged to Mr. Mayham, my sister came home. I was not at home at the time, having gone away for a day or two. Gregory Mayham saw her, and her treatment of him was something he could not understand. He thought it was I, of course. He went to her and demanded an explanation, and by that means she learned who he was, and all about it. She played her part well, and lured him away after her."

"That was a cool proceeding."

"It was nothing for her. She did it to cheat me of his love. She may even be base enough to lead him to marry her, if he is not made aware of the imposture. He loved me, I know, and may be willing to overlook everything he finds evil in her and marry her."

"And what do you desire me to do?"

"I wish you would find him, give him some idea of the truth, and then let him come here and see me."

"I will do that. What do you know about this man?"

"Very little; but, I do know he is honest, though poor, and that I love him. I care for nothing else."

"You know he is an Englishman, of course?"

"He has told me that."

"Well, I could tell you more about him, but will leave that for him to disclose himself."

"It is nothing to his discredit, is it?"

"No; positively not. After what you have told me, I must make it my business to see him, though I am in no frame of mind for business just now. Still, he must be warned of his danger."

"Yes; he must be warned. He may not believe you, but ask him if he sees much in this Queen of Hearts that is like what he knew in

me. He cannot but acknowledge the great difference. That admitted, tell him I am here and send him to me. Perhaps he will forgive me for keeping the secret from him."

"I will do as you request. And if your sister is really the desperate person you say, perhaps you had better remain unknown for the present."

"Yes; that is my intention."

Dick took leave, and on entering the bar-room, the first person he fell in with was Harry Stacey, "Handsome Harry."

"Well," Stacey asked, "what is the word? Have you been able to learn anything further? What are you going to do? I wish I could help you."

"Yes, I wish you could," Dick responded, taking the last observation first. "No, I have learned nothing further, and I have made up my mind that I must give up and accept whatever terms I can get."

"You don't mean it!"

"What else can I do? I must do anything that holds out a promise for the safety of my wife—that before all else."

"Well, that is so; but it is rather rough on you."

"Yes, so it is. If it were only my own life that is threatened, then I would defy the rascal; but as it is, I am helpless, and Kate's life is dearer to me than my own."

"How are you going to proceed?"

"I have been thinking a good deal about that. I did think I would put up a notice of surrender; but on further consideration I will not do that."

"What then?"

"Why, I am going to post up a notice here requesting another interview with the red gentleman, when I will come to some sort of terms with him. I see nothing else I can do."

"Well, that is so, considering the advantage he has over you. But, do you think he will see the notice?"

"I believe he has allies here, even if not here himself in some disguise or other."

"You think so! Well, if that is the case, of course he will see your notice, and may give you another interview. You want to take care it does not prove worse than the first, however."

"I will take care of that. For my wife's sake I dare not risk another fight with him. I was mad to do so before, for even had I killed him the secret of her hiding place might have perished with him. That would have made matters worse than they are now."

"I have to agree with you in that. It is too bad there is not some other way out of it. But, you will have him on the hip anyhow."

"I fail to see how."

"Why, agreeing to his terms, you can get your wife safely out of his hands, and after that you can go for him like a Nemesis."

Dick smiled sadly.

"You do not know me," he said. "My word once given, I do not break it."

"That is all right, with friends; but with an outlaw it is different. No one would expect you to keep your word with him."

"Our views differ on that point. If he keeps faith with me, and restores my wife to me unharmed, I shall keep my part of the compact to the letter. That is the kind of man I am."

"Well, I admire the sentiment, but it is going to be rough on Deadwood Dick. What if you are called on to run this Red Roy down?"

"I shall have to decline, that is all."

"It will stamp you a coward."

"No, I guess not; my record is too well made for that. The worst it can do is to mark my defeat."

"Well, well, it is your business, and were I in your place I might do the same thing. As you say, your wife's safety comes before everything else."

Dick changed the subject.

"Have you seen Walt Thornton?" he asked.

"I saw him not long ago. He was at the Palace then."

"Then I will drop around there and see him, after I have put up my notice for the benefit of Red Roy."

"By the way, you told me about the business that brought you here. Have you found your man Mayham yet? But, then, I suppose you have not looked for him."

"I have not looked, true, but I have found him."

"Perhaps he and this fellow Thornton are one and the same."

"You guess it; they are."

"Well, I'm glad you have had no trouble in locating him. It will no doubt be welcome news to him to learn of his good fortune."

"Undoubtedly it will. By the way, say noth-

ing, for he may want to continue under his assumed name, and that is his own affair. I would not have disclosed anything to you, but you would soon have guessed it anyhow."

"I had guessed it already, and it would soon have been confirmed. You may trust me."

"Now I will write and post my notice."

Stepping to the bar, Dick called for pen and paper.

It did not take him long to pen-print what he desired to set forth, and when it was done he posted it up.

It was like this:

"RED ROY.

"I want another interview with you, time and place to suit yourself. You have communicated with me before, and of course can find a way to do so again. Let me hear from you soon, and in the mean time beware of doing harm to your prisoner."

"DEADWOOD DICK, JR."

"There," Dick said, "we will see what effect that will have. Blocked in every direction, it is the only thing I can do."

Just then Mayor Archibald Grimm entered the bar-room.

"Great storm-king!" he exclaimed. "What is it this time? What are you postin' up, Richard?"

"A little communication for Red Roy, the same as you have done yourself," was the response. "Mine is of a different kind, however."

The mayor read it.

"I should say it is," he cried. "Mine means war, while yours has the tone of surrender. I hope ye ain't goin' to take water for ther p'izen cuss."

"You will have to call it that, I suppose," Dick had to admit. "He holds the winning card, and I see no other way out of the situation. I shall have to accept any terms I can get."

"That's rough, by ther livin' Jupiter et al! What ef ye find he has killed yer wife, though, or done harm to her? I reckon thar will be war then."

Dick's face took on its hard, grim look.

"It will be his life or mine," he responded.

"But, I hope nothing of that sort has happened. I cannot believe this Red Roy is evil enough to turn murderer of women."

While Dick was speaking, Henry Whipple, the man with the tufts of whiskers on his side cheeks, entered. He stopped, interested in what was being said.

Dick looked at him, and of a sudden a new suspicion flashed upon his mind. Could it be that this man was the outlaw? There was not much to support the suspicion, but then Dick did not look for the man to appear before him in his red attire, with his name branded on his forehead, or anything of that sort. This might be he.

CHAPTER XIII.

DICK WARNS WALT THORNTON.

PRESENTLY, when Deadwood Dick was about to leave the room to go to the Palace Saloon to see Gregory Mayham, the man with the "Galloways," Henry Whipple, followed him to the door. This Dick noticed, but did not pay any attention to the man until a detaining hand fell upon his arm.

"Well?" Dick interrogated, stopping and facing him.

"May I have a word with you in private, sir?" the man asked. "I may be able to help you some."

"You may have a word with me, certainly," answered Dick. "As to your being able to help me any, that remains to be seen. Shall we talk here?"

This had been said in low tones.

"No, I will go out with you," was the response. "I do not care to have any one overhear what I was about to tell you. I may be altogether wrong in my suspicions, but that will be for you to determine."

Together they went out and walked slowly in the direction of the Palace.

"You suspect that Red Roy is here in the camp," said Whipple, by way of introducing what he had to tell.

"Either he, or an ally," answered Dick.

"Exactly; and it matters little. Now, I may be wrong, but there is a man here whose actions are not altogether right, to my ideas."

"Very likely."

"In fact, being interested in your case, hearing nothing else, I have come to think this person may be Red Roy, or an ally."

"Who is the person?"

"Well, a young man who spends most of his time at the saloon. He is known as Walt Thornton, I believe."

Deadwood Dick stopped short and looked at Whipple keenly.

Knowing full well who and what Walt Thornton was, here was further proof that Whipple was not above suspicion.

"What do you know about the young man?" Dick demanded.

"Well, nothing; only he acts rather peculiar, as you yourself must admit if you watch him a little."

"That is no proof that he is an outlaw, sir. I might as soon suspect you of being the same, if I saw anything out of the usual about you; yet that would not be anything like proof."

He watched the man closely as he spoke. His words seemed to have no effect, but rolled off as harmlessly as water from a duck's back. If other than he seemed, the man certainly had command of his nerve and would not let any agitation betray him.

"Of course not," he made answer. "This was a suspicion that seemed to force itself upon me, and knowing the great trouble you are in I thought I would mention it to you."

"That is all right, sir, and I am obliged to you for your interest. I will take notice of the young man and see if I can agree with you."

"You are going to see him now?"

"Yes."

"Well, I will leave you and let you go alone. I will return to the hotel and there await your return. I shall be eager to know what you think."

"You shall know when I come back."

They parted, Dick entering the Palace and Whipple retracing his steps to the hotel.

Dick found Walt Thornton in conversation with Queen of Hearts, both seated in easy-chairs at the far end of the saloon.

The woman was not clad now as she had been on the previous night, but in a plain dress. She was handsome, and the very likeness of her sister at the hotel.

There were not many persons in the saloon, as was always the case at that hour of the day, and the two were evidently enjoying a private talk. Dick did not disturb them.

It was not long, however, before the woman observed him.

She nodded pleasantly to him, and motioned for him to approach, an invitation which Dick accepted promptly.

"I see you have fully recovered," the woman said. "How fortunate you were that it was no worse for you. Are you acquainted with Mr. Thornton?"

"No, I am not," Dick made response.

An introduction followed.

"Yes," Dick then made acknowledgement, "I am all right again; and it was, as you say, a fortunate thing it was no worse for me. It was a close call."

"Truly it was. Well, have you any news concerning your wife?"

"None whatever."

"And what will you do? It must be terrible suspense for you."

Dick told what he intended doing, and conversation ensued similar to what has been quoted between him and Handsome Harry.

"You have thought of no way in which I can be of service to you, have you?" the Queen of Hearts presently asked.

"There is no way, so far as I can think," answered Dick, "unless you can show me my enemy, or his ally. I am satisfied he is not alone in his work here."

"Hail you think that? What leads you to that conclusion?"

"Well, the game he is playing, it seems to me, is slightly too much for one alone to handle."

"You do not suspect any one, do you?"

"What would you say if I were to tell you I suspect you?"

So suddenly did Dick bring this out that it was impossible for the woman to be prepared for it. She paled and then grew red.

Dick's eyes were fixed upon hers, and he noted the effort with which she recovered herself and smiled. He smiled, too, and was quick to speak again, to disarm the suspicion he had possibly raised.

"That was rather rough," he said. "Pray forgive me, Queen of Hearts. What I meant to imply is, that it is a mystery so deep that I might as soon suspect you of being concerned in it as any one else. You know I am entirely in the dark respecting it."

"But what a start you gave me! Why, I thought you really meant it. It was almost cruel of you, Mr. Bristol."

She laughed lightly, and the incident seemingly forgotten in a few minutes.

Dick had taken a seat, as he had been invited to do, and did not seem disposed to take his leave in a hurry.

There was considerable talk, of no particular interest to our story, and at last the Queen of Hearts rose and took her leave.

She retired to rooms in the rear, and when she had gone Deadwood Dick leaned forward to address the young man on a matter in which he could not fail to have interest.

"Mr. Mayham," he said, "I must speak to you upon a matter of greatest importance."

The young man had started violently at mention of his name, and looked at Dick in a wondering sort of way.

"Do not be surprised that I know you," Dick added. "I came here on purpose to find you, and had a photograph of you to guide me. I have news for you."

"You do not wait for me to admit my identity," the young man said, then. "It is taken for granted, it seems, that I am the person you name. Would it not be well to have proof of it?"

"Not necessary," answered Dick. "I am positive; admit it or not, just as you please."

"Well, what is the news you have for me?"

"I have been sent to find Gregory Mayham, to inform him that his cousin is dead, and that he is heir to the estate and title in England, and that his return to that country is desired."

Mayham had partly sprung from his chair, turning white and red by turns, and could not hide his emotion.

"Is this true?" he cried. "There is no jest about it?"

"It is true," Dick assured. "I am not the person to jest, least of all now."

"Well, this is a windfall. I never expected to come into this thing, for my cousin was a rugged fellow, and looked likely to live a round number of years. What more have you to tell me?"

"Nothing, except that I am supposed to see that you get safely off for England as soon as possible. Under the present circumstances, however, I do not see how it is going to be possible for me to do that. The best I can do is to offer you some common sense advice."

"Well, what is that?"

"That you do not let it be known who you are; that you break away from here as soon as you can; that you make few friends until you again set your foot firmly on English soil."

"You speak as though danger were dogging my steps."

"I do not know that, but you can see for yourself that what I have said is best for you to follow."

The young man's face grew suddenly sober, and he was silent.

"I cannot leave here at once," he said, speaking as much to himself as to Dick. "I am bound here by ties stronger than you can think."

"You may be wrong about that," said Dick. "Do you give me leave to guess what the tie is?"

"Yes, you have that right, certainly."

"You are in love with this woman, this Queen of Hearts."

Confusion was for a moment pictured upon the young man's face, and he did not speak at once.

"I have guessed aright," Dick added. "Now, are you willing to listen to a word more of advice from me?"

"You are a strange man, Mr. Bristol. I have heard much about you, since you came here. Men say you know everything, and I believe you do."

"Well, hardly," Dick denied. "I do, however, know one or two things which you do not know. Let us still be cautious in our talk. You believe this woman to be Almah Parmiter, of course."

"How did you know her name?"

"No matter; that is who you take her to be. Let me tell you that you are mistaken; that this is not she."

"Not Almah Parmiter! You are crazy."

"Am I? Stop and think a moment. Is this woman's conduct like that of the girl who won your regard? Has she not changed past all belief?"

Dick was following the clew given him by the girl at the hotel.

"I must admit that," said Thornton.

"Then let me tell you the truth at once. This woman is not Almah Parmiter, but her twin sister. Her name is Ariel. She is her sister's enemy, and has lured you away from the one you really love. No, do not dispute it; I have the proof. Go to the Silver Bugle, quietly, a Mr."

ask to see Anne Parson, and be prepared to meet the woman to whom you are engaged. This is all I need say. Be careful, do not let on that you know the truth, but get away from here as quietly and as quickly as you can, taking Almah with you if you still want her to marry you. There is danger here for both of you."

CHAPTER XIV.

ARRESTED ON SUSPICION.

DEADWOOD DICK, after some further talk with Walt Thornton, or Gregory Mayham, in which he gave him all the particulars in his possession, returned to the hotel. Mayor Archibald Grimm was still there, talking with a group of men, and the subject was the one topic that was uppermost in every mind—the stirring events of the past twenty-four hours and the reappearance of Red Roy.

Harry Stacey, or Handsome Harry, was one of the group, and was one of the first to see Dick when he entered the room.

"Well, did you find your man?" he asked.

"Yes, I found him, and have had a talk with him."

"I thought you would find him still there. No use asking if you have made any progress in your own case, I suppose."

"No, I have not, as you rightly infer," answered Dick. "I cannot hope for anything now until I get a reply to my letter there," indicating the notice he had posted.

As he looked in the direction he indicated, he was seen to start, and the others followed his gaze.

Dick sprang forward instantly, and the others saw quickly what had drawn his attention. Over the notice he had posted was a folded paper stuck there with a pin.

Everybody was amazed to see it, and every man of them uttered an exclamation of one sort or another. No one had seen the paper put there, and Dick had been the first to discover it.

Dick had already put out his hand to take it down, but he stopped.

"How came this here?" he demanded, turning and facing the crowd. "Did any one among you see it put up?"

"Nary a man of us," declared the mayor, promptly. "Ef thar had, you bet ther cuss what done et would 'a' been nabbed, eb, me children?"

"I sh'ud snicker to sneeze," agreed one man, in his homely way.

"Has any suspicious character been in here?"

"Nary a one."

"Mr. Stacey," to handsome Harry, "what do you think about it?"

"I have a suspicion, but I hate to express it," was the response. "It may get an innocent man into trouble. Suppose you see what the thing has to say, before I tell what I suspect. The note itself may explain something."

Dick snatched the folded paper from the wall, and opened it.

He read it first to himself, and then out aloud. This is what the paper contained:

"DEADWOOD DICK, JR.:

"Yours of even date has been noticed, and contents digested. Glad to find you are inclined to be reasonable. You want an interview. Very well; you shall have one. You will be notified of time and place later on. So far your wife has not been harmed. You warned me against harming her; let me give you a word of warning by way of exchange of compliment. When my messenger comes to give you notice of time and place of interview, do not attempt to hold him, for if you do your life will pay the forfeit in the same moment. Beware!

"Again I subscribe—

"FROM YOU KNOW WHOM."

"Great storm-king a-howlin'!" cried the mayor. "This hyer is what I call puttin' et under our noses purty strong. Who kin ther cuss be anyhow?"

"It would be worth a good deal to know," said Stacey. "Let us look at the writing, Mr. Bristol, and see if any of us can recognize it. It is not likely, however, since the other could not be detected."

The mayor stood nearest to Dick, and Dick handed the note to him.

"What is your suspicion, Mr. Stacey?" he at the same time requested. "You see the note itself discloses nothing."

"Before I answer that," was the response, "I desire to see the writing, to compare it with a certain signature here in the hotel register. I may be all at sea, but the suspicion is there."

"Hyer, then, take et and compare et," cried the mayor, passing the note on to him. "I can't see nothin' out of et meself. But, then, I ain't a good et that sort of thing, anyhow. You see ther idee that this Red Roy is hyer at ther Bugle, hev ye?"

"In the moment, and I'll answer."

Stacey, with the note in hand, stepped to the register and compared the writing with that somewhere on the page.

"By heavens!" he exclaimed, "I believe I am justified in naming my suspicion, Mr. Bristol."

"Name the man," cried Dick. "Suspicion won't kill him, anyhow."

"Look here, and compare the two writings."

Stepping aside, he yet held his hand on the book, and with his finger pointed to the name—

"HENRY WHIPPLE."

Dick compared the writings eagerly. He had a suspicious thought against this man once already. Was that suspicion about to receive support?

At first there was little resemblance, he thought, but he soon changed his mind in that respect. The capital "W" in the note and that in the signature were quite alike in form. It was the same with the letter "p."

"I believe you are right," Dick had to admit.

"Then he's our mutton, by ther great storm-king!" cried the mayor. "Whar is he?"

"One question first," said Dick. "Was he in here while I was out? If not, we may be judging him falsely."

"Yes, he certainly was in here," answered Stacey. "He came in shortly after you went out, but did not remain very long. I did not notice which way he went."

"Did any one else notice?" asked Dick.

"Et strikes me he went to his room," put in the proprietor.

"Well, was he seen near this poster of mine?" Dick further demanded. "Was he seen on this side of the room at all?"

"If I remember right," Stacey reflected, "he took a few turns around the room, after which he went out on the piazza. After that I did not see him at all."

"He's our game," cried the mayor. "We'll have him, anyhow, and if he's innocent et won't hurt him any, as you said yourself. Come right on, me childrun, and we will see ef he is in his room."

With that the mayor dashed out of the room, into the hall, and up the stairs, with ten or a dozen of his "childrun" at his back.

Deadwood Dick and Handsome Harry remained behind.

"I shall be sorry, if he is innocent," Harry mused, "for Grimm is just the man to hang him if there is suspicion half-strong enough. He rules here with a grip of iron, as perhaps you have seen."

"Yes, I have noticed that; but, the man must have a fair trial, no matter how much suspicion there is. And, Stacey, do not let the mayor forget in his haste that my wife's life is at stake. The rascal has yet the strongest hand, even if Whipple does prove to be the man."

The excitement was great.

In a few moments loud words were heard in the interior of the house, followed by a scuffle, and then the heavy tread of returning feet.

The mayor was soon in the bar-room again, and after him came his followers, Henry Whipple in their midst a prisoner. The man was pale, his eyes were dilated, and he looked terrified.

"Now, whar's that ar' note?" the mayor cried.

It was given to him, and stepping to the prisoner he held it up before his face, demanding:

"Is this hyer your writin', Mister Man?"

"N-no, sir," was the gasped response.

"Do ye swear et ain't?"

"Y-yes, sir."

"Then tell me how et is that you was seen ter stick et up thar on ther wall with a pin," was the fierce demand, the mayor pointing with his long arm to the spot where the note had been found.

"I—I—I didn't do it," the prisoner declared. "There is some mistake, my good man."

"Thar ain't no mistake about et," the mayor insisted. "This hyer writin' is ther same as your writin' on ther register thar, and ye can't git out of et. You ar' in a bad box. We hev got ye at last, Red Roy, and a rope and limb is waitin' fer ye."

The man trembled in every limb at this charge, and could hardly stand.

"This—is this a mistake," he gasped. "I am no outlaw; I am not Red Roy, as you charge. I did not write this; I did not post it up there; I never saw it before; I am innocent, gentlemen, I swear I am. How came you to suspect me? My name is Henry Whipple, and I have no other."

"I'll tell ye how we kem ter 'spect ye," the mayor made answer. "Ther note wasn't up thar when you kem in ther room hyer a leetle while ago, but et was up thar after ye went out.

Then, when we found et was like your writin', what else was we ter do? Now, you say you ain't guilty, but we hev got ter have proof of that. As mayor of this hyer camp I'm goin' ter hold ye prisoner 'till ther proof is forth-comin'."

"Allow me a word, mayor?" asked Dick, at this point.

"Sartain; many as ye want."

The mayor was Dick's friend, as, for that matter, was the whole camp.

"Well, it is this," said Dick: "This thing will soon prove itself. If this man is innocent, as he claims, my meeting with Red Roy while he is a prisoner will be the proof of it. If I have an interview with the outlaw to-night, there can then be no question."

"I see only one other thing that might rest against him, in that case," spoke up Stacey.

"And what is that?"

"That he may be an ally of the outlaw's."

"Well, we don't keer a durn whether he's Red Roy or only a tool of his," the mayor cried. "Ef he is either one he will swing, you bet. Take him off, me childrun, and lock him up fer trial. This hyer camp has declared war 'g'in' ther outlaw tribe, an' war et is goin' ter be, you kin bet on't."

In spite of all his struggles and all his protests, the man with the tufts of side-whiskers was dragged out of the room and away to the lock-up, a place he was not likely to get out of without some outside help; and the mayor took precaution against his getting that. And when he had been taken from the room the case was talked over at length, pro and con.

Finally Dick went out into the sitting-room, to find Almah Parmiter, or Anne Parson, as she was known there.

She was not there, but a servant carried word up to her, and presently she came down and entered the room where Dick was waiting.

"Well," she asked, "have you satisfied yourself of the truth of my story?"

"I have no reason to think you have told me anything else," was the answer. "I have seen Mr. Mayham."

"Then he is here! I was sure of it. And did you tell him the whole matter, and that I am here and eager to see him? Did you?"

"Yes; I told him everything. I told him, too, to come here quietly and see you, and then to get away from here as quietly as possible, taking you with him, if he still cares for you. And I believe he will come. You had better not lose any time here, for reasons which Mayham will probably explain to you himself."

CHAPTER XV.

A PARTING PICTURE OF RED ROY'S DOMAIN.

THE day wore wearily away, wearily for both Deadwood Dick and his imprisoned wife, and particularly for the latter. Let us look again into the red chamber where she was held in bondage, still coupled with the galling handcuffs to the negress who had her in keeping. The preceding night had been an almost sleepless one, and the long day had been like a hideous nightmare. Kate's mind had been busy, trying to think of some plan for escape, but all in vain. She had not refused to eat, that would have been folly; and had just finished her supper when we look in upon her.

Particularly during the last hour had her mind been at work considering her situation, and trying to guess what the outcome would be. She had all confidence in Dick, but knew that he was entirely without a clue, and the chances of his discovering her hiding-place were against him. Perhaps he would surrender everything, and make terms with the outlaws, for her sake. Her whole soul was against that. She would die if she must, but Dick must not make conditional terms with a villain, not even for her sake. If she could only communicate with him in some manner! That, however, seemed out of the question.

Was it impossible? She thought and thought, bending all the powers of her mind to the single question. If she sent a communication at all, it must be through Red Roy himself. In that case, she would have to write it in his presence, and he must be allowed to read it. It certainly looked impossible to invent any hidden message that would not be discovered when it was put to the test under his close scrutiny. It was impossible. Yet, was it? That thought urged her on and on, and finally a thought came to her that immediately filled her with hope. It was a desperate chance, but it was her only chance, and the risk must be taken. From that moment she began to play toward a certain end.

Shortly after eating her supper she gave

way to tears, to the surprise of the negress to whom she was fettered, for up to this time she had been stoically calm and apparently indifferent to everything. Naturally the negress asked what was the matter, when Kate told her she could hold out no longer, that she must be allowed to go; that she was ready to accept any terms and conditions that might be offered. And she ended by demanding that Red Roy be sent for.

Accordingly the cord was pulled, the cord that communicated with some other part of the cavern, and presently the negress Martha came in. She, too, was surprised at the change, but took it all as a matter of course when it was made known to her that the prisoner was eager to gain her liberty at any sacrifice, and promising to have the master there as soon as possible she went back to her domain.

It was a considerable time before Red Roy put in his appearance. When he came he ironically expressed his sympathy for his fair prisoner, hoping he could do something for her, and declaring his sorrow at finding her weeping. He could not stand tears, and if there was anything he could do she had only to command him. He was her willing servant.

"All I ask is my freedom," Kate tearfully declared.

"And that I am eager to restore to you," the outlaw made response. "It only depends on that stubborn husband of yours."

"If I could only communicate with him once more," Kate cried. "If you would only let me urge him to accept your terms for my sake, I am sure he would do so."

"Well, perhaps you are right," was the thoughtful response. "He has already asked another interview, which I have promised, and I think he is about ready to give in. You may write to him."

"Oh! thank you! Please free my hand and I will do so in all haste."

The handcuff was removed, and Kate took her seat at the table with eager and anxious haste.

As hastily she took paper and envelope from the drawer in the table where she knew they were kept, and was about to write when the outlaw stopped her.

"One moment first, if you please," he requested. "Let me look at that paper and envelope. I do not trust you altogether, and I do not mean to allow you a chance to play me a trick."

"You need not fear me now," Kate declared. "Take them and search them, and then read every word as I write. How could I hope to deceive you?"

He examined the paper and envelope carefully, and gave them back, when she immediately began her note.

It took her but a few moments to dash it off, and when done it read thus:

"DICK:—

"Do not hesitate longer, but make any terms you can with Red Roy. Your every effort to find me, no matter how great, will result in failure. You know what the threats are. Do not make any delay, but for my sake accept any terms whatever."

KATE."

Her hand had trembled, and the writing was large and straggling, looking different in the original from what it does in print. Every line was full.

Red Roy took it, read it carefully, and put it in the envelope himself and sealed it, after which he gave it back to the writer for her to direct, remarking that he did not mean to allow her any chance to trick him if he could help it.

Kate took the missive and directed it, after which she was again handcuffed to the negress, and the outlaw, with the note in his possession, took his leave.

Meanwhile, in another chamber of the cavern, one that was far less splendid in its appointments than this red apartment, was another prisoner. It was no other than Gregory Mayham.

How he had come there we will not pause now to conjecture, but there he was, true enough, and securely bound. There was a sullen look upon his face, and an expression of grim determination about his mouth. He was, however, helpless in the power of the outlaw.

When Red Roy went from the apartment where Kodak Kate was, he proceeded to this other where Mayham was confined.

He had on his red hat and mask, but was clad otherwise in the gown we have mentioned before.

"Well, Sir Gregory Mayham, how do you find yourself?" he greeted.

"Who are you?" was the demand. "Why

have I been brought to this hole? I demand my release at once."

"Not hardly," the outlaw said, lightly. "I have not brought you here for a joke. I think Sir Gregory Mayham can afford to buy his liberty."

"You scoundrel!" the captive cried. "Do you mean to say you are going to hold me here for ransom? My name is Walt Thornton, and I have nothing to pay with if I would."

"Oh, that is a good story; but I know better, you see. You are Gregory Mayham, and you have just succeeded to the estate and title in England. You have got to come down handsomely, however, before you will ever be permitted to enjoy it. This is grim business, I assure you."

"You will find it grim business, if I ever get a chance to pay you for this," was the fierce retort. "I demand to be set at liberty immediately, and if you do not free me you will regret it."

"Do not excite yourself," was the calm and cool advice. "It is not good for the health to excite yourself, you know. Be quiet, now, Sir Gregory, and I will name the conditions of your ransom. When you are ready to pay me five thousand pounds out of your princely estate, then you may have some hope for your liberty, and not till then."

"Scoundrel! I have not five thousand dimes to my name. Even were I the person you say I am, I could not handle any money of that estate till I had gone to England and proved my claim, so you are fooling yourself doubly. You will never get anything out of me, so do your worst. I think you will let me go when you find there is nothing to be gained by holding me."

"We'll see about that, Sir Gregory. No use for you to deny who you are, for I am positive on that head, you see. Perhaps when the days of your confinement begin to lengthen into weeks, and weeks into months, you will think better of it, and be ready to make some effort to buy your liberty. I think you will, anyhow, and on that belief I am going to hold fast to you. Think it over. You won't be allowed to starve here, but you won't fare very sumptuously either. Ta-ta."

With that, and without waiting to hear the fierce remarks that were hurled after him by his enraged prisoner, the outlaw left the chamber and made his way off in the direction of the outer air.

Shortly after that, the masked woman who had saved Red Roy's life paid a visit to the red apartment where Kodak Kate was, and greeting her about as Red Roy himself had greeted, demanded:

"Well, do you think that husband of yours will have the good sense to heed the warning of Red Roy, and do as you have asked him to do?"

"I have never had cause to doubt the good sense of Deadwood Dick, Madam Outlaw," was Kate's response, "and I do not think I need doubt it now. As to his doing what I have asked, I can only say I hope he will."

"I hope so, too, for it is unpleasant to have to hold you here, and of course it will be slightly disagreeable to have to kill you. Then, too, think what a shock it will be to your husband to receive your head on a shovel, or in some similar fashion."

"If it ever comes to that," cried Kate, showing much spirit, "I warn you for your own good that you had better kill Deadwood Dick in the same hour. If you do not, the earth will not be large enough to hide you from his vengeance. I mean not you alone, but you, Red Roy, and all the rest of his hirelings and worse."

The masked woman laughed scornfully, and after another taunting remark, to which a cutting response was given, she withdrew.

Soon after she joined Red Roy in yet another apartment of the strange secret cavern.

"Well, what do you think?" the outlaw asked.

"I hardly know what to think," was the answer. "She is as defiant as ever, just now."

"That is because of her spite against you for saving me from her bullet, no doubt. I do not think there can be any trick about the note."

"Well, perhaps not, and you ought to know, since you saw her write it and you sealed it yourself. You say you remember nearly word for word what it contained? Tell me again."

"Why, she tells him not to hesitate longer, but to make whatever terms he can with me. That his every effort to find her, no matter what it is, must be a failure. Reminds him of my threats, and urges him not to delay, but for her sake to accept any terms."

"I do not see how there can be anything secret in such a note as that. And, even if there is, what matter? It cannot be more than

a word. Yes, deliver it, is my advice, for it may have the effect to make Dick all the more ready to come to your terms, if he has not fully made up his mind to do so already. Don't you agree?"

"That was my idea from the first, till you suggested that there must be some secret communication in this missive. Yes, I think we are on the way to getting rid of Deadwood Dick now, and that for all time, for I know he will keep his word, once it is pledged. The power of that terror of the West will be forever broken, and then, with Whipple out of the way, all will be clear for our work."

"Yes, when one other has been removed. Then we can make Gregory Mayham give up his golden pelf, and carry out all our other scheme. I tell you, Red Roy, we are a pair of royal rogues whose names are yet going to become a terror to this wild land. Ha, ha, ha!"

Both laughed, and soon after passed out. What if Deadwood Dick could have been near, to have overheard all this, spoken as it was in their natural voices.

CHAPTER XVI.

WAR TO THE TEETH.

MEANWHILE, Deadwood Dick, at the hotel, was chafing and fretting like an imprisoned tiger, waiting anxiously for the summons from the outlaw that was to call him to a second interview. He had not spent the afternoon idly, but had been vainly trying to get some trace of the outlaw and his allies there at the camp. He did not believe the man Whipple, now in the jail, was Red Roy, though he might be one of his tools. He had, however, some suspicion against Queen of Hearts, the handsome proprietor of the Palace Saloon. Still, he had been unable to fetch any proof against her. As yet he had not made known this suspicion to any one.

The evening was advancing, and he was pacing the floor of the bar-room, having been talking with Mayor Grim, Harry Stacey, and others, but they having now left him, where there came a call for him to come into the ladies' room where Miss Parson desired to see him again.

Dick went in, and found the woman in rather some excitement.

"What is it?" Dick asked.

"Mr. Mayham has not been to see me yet, and I begin to feel anxious about him. Have you seen him lately?"

It suddenly came to Dick's mind that he had not seen him at all since his interview with him at the Palace that morning. So taken up with his own troubles, he had given no further thought to him.

"No, I have not seen him," he answered. "Since you remind me of him, I have not seen him at all since this morning. I will make some inquiries about him, if you desire. I will do so, anyhow, for I am concerned about him. I will return shortly and let you know."

Glad to have something to divert his thoughts for a time, Dick went out, making his first call at the Palace Saloon. There nothing had been learned of the young man and no one could be found who had seen him that afternoon. And it was the same elsewhere. He was not to be found.

After a pretty thorough search Dick had to return and report. The young woman was almost overcome. Had she known of the good fortune that had come to her lover, possibly she might have believed he had proved false to her; but knowing nothing of it yet, she had no ground for that suspicion. Perhaps she would not have entertained it, anyhow.

"It is the work of my sister," she cried almost fiercely. "She is at the bottom of it. She must have learned that I am here, and by some means has removed him. But let her take care, for she will goad me beyond what I can bear!"

Dick talked with her a few minutes, and after that retired to his room.

When he entered, almost the first thing to catch his eyes was a letter on the stand near the window.

Springing forward he caught it up, thinking it must be from the outlaw, but a single glance at the superscription showed him it was from Kate.

With impatient haste he tore it open and read its contents, noting at the same time the nervous style in which it was written. It fired him still more with impatience for the interview.

"Yes," he said to himself, "I will sacrifice everything to rescue you, Kate. I will take whatever terms he offers, and fool no longer about it. I should have done so last night could never forgive myself, should harm

to you. Deadwood Dick gives up defeated this time."

He had taken a seat while speaking thus to himself, and was still gazing at the missive in his hand. Suddenly he gave a start, looking more closely. The words in the last line "any terms whatever," had claimed his attention, being underscored. At almost the same moment the ending words of the second line "I have struck his attention and he coupled the two fragments."

"What have I discovered here?" he asked himself. "This reads 'Do not make any terms whatever.' Is there a double meaning to this letter? It certainly is written in a strange style for Kate, and the wording is peculiar for her, so much so that I was beginning to think it a forgery. Let me see about it. 'Do not hesitate longer, but make every effort to find me, no matter what the threats are. Do not make any terms whatever.'"

Dick was upon his feet in an instant, greatly excited, for him.

"Kate! My brave, bonny Kate!" he exclaimed under his breath. "She has taken this means to communicate with me secretly, doing it under the very eyes of her captor. Reading every other line of her note, this is what it tells me. But, ought I to obey? I fear the worst. Yet, she urges me to make no terms, and she must know whether she is in imminent peril or not. What shall I do about it? What ought I to do?"

A knock at the door interrupted him.

Opening it, he found there his host, the landlord of the Silver Bugle, with a letter in hand.

"For me?" Dick asked at once.

"Yes; and I opine it's from that Red Roy cuss. Anyhow, it came mighty near to putting my eyes when it was flung at me by somebody out on their peeazzy about a minnit ago."

Dick had already taken the missive, opened it, and was reading it. It was as follows:

DEADWOOD DICK:—

"On the ledge above the camp at midnight. Come entirely alone, and mention to no one the time and place. Your last and only chance."

"FROM YOU KNOW WHOM."

"What is et?" the landlord asked. "Is et what ye was expectin' from that bad man, ther Oregon Outlaw?"

"Yes, it is from him," Dick answered. "Do not say anything to anybody, and I will meet him at the time and place he names. I have plenty of time, I see. It is all right, and much obliged to you."

Closing his host out, with that, Dick sat down again to ponder over the situation. What should he do—what ought he to do? He would keep the appointment, of course; but, regarding terms with the outlaw—He could not decide. If Kate were only free—

That was the sticking point. She was not free, but in the power of a foe who had already shown the strength of his hand. If he made terms with this man, his power would be forever broken, unless he broke his word. That he would not do. On the other hand, if he refused terms, Kate's life might pay the forfeit. It was easy to choose, for the life of his wife rose above every other consideration; but, then, her words kept ringing in his ears—"Do not make any terms whatever."

Finally his decision was made. A grim, hard look settled upon his face, and to himself he said:

"No, I will make no terms. We are both of one mind. God help me if I err; God protect my wife from harm! It shall be war, war to the bitter end, between me and these infernal scoundrels!"

Lighting a cigar, he went down and out without going through the bar-room, and walked leisurely away up the gulch. No one followed him, as he took care to note, and presently he came to the ledge trail that led to the shelf above the camp, and taking that, began the ascent.

Finally he drew near his destination, and looking at his watch by the light of his cigar, found that it was about midnight, the time appointed. Throwing away his weed, now about finished, he drew his trusty revolvers, and with them in hand, pressed on and stepped out upon the broad shelf where he expected to meet his foe.

The moon, again just in sight as on the previous night, sent its light down through the pass that led back from the bluff, and there, standing full in the light, clad in his peculiar costume of red, was Red Roy. He was alone, or seemed to be, and was standing with his arms crossed across his breast. He did not move when Dick appeared, but after a moment of silence he said:

"Well, Deadwood Dick, I see you are true to the appointment. You are no coward, for you have come alone to a place where your life is in my hands. I see you are armed and ready to do battle again, but it is useless. Put up your weapons. Half a dozen rifles cover your heart at this moment, and a signal from me would send you into eternity before you could lift an arm. So, be sensible, put away your weapons, and let us talk."

"If you have got me covered as you claim," said Dick, putting away his weapons, since he had no use for them at once, but yet keeping his hands on them; "why do you not make me a prisoner and do away with me? That will relieve you of all concern on my account, and will probably be the best way to settle with me. A word to your riflemen, and you will rid your path of Deadwood Dick forever."

"I will tell you why, Dick Bristol. I do not take life unless forced to do so. I am willing to make terms with you, and allow you to depart. If you are not so blind as not to see where your interest lies, you will gladly accept. Now, you wanted an interview with me; what do you want? Let me hear at once."

"Well, on what terms will you release my wife and restore her to me?" Dick demanded.

"On the terms I gave you before, and none other."

"Then we cannot come to an agreement. I have some right to demand as well as to be dictated to."

"And what is your demand?"

"That you release my wife and allow her to join me here at Basalt Butte. After that I will deal with you further."

"No, sir. You must accept the terms I offer, or none. Your wife is eager to have you do so, as you already know. Her safety depends upon your decision here and now."

"Then we cannot agree, and our interview is in vain. I have made up my mind to fight it out, and so give you warning of my intention. If you have me under rifle cover, as you claim, it is in your power to dispose of me at once. You had better do so."

"No; you are no coward, and I am no murderer—at least not in that way. If your decision is fixed, return to the camp, and to-morrow our warfare will begin. You and the whole camp of Basalt Butte against Red Roy and his few. This ends all communication between us. Go!"

"If war, why not begin here and now?" demanded Dick.

"So let it be, if you are in a hurry to die. My rifles can speak quickly enough."

"Then bid them speak!" cried Dick, defiantly. He had sprung forward a few paces with the quickness of thought. "You must either take my life, Red Roy, or I make you my prisoner."

Weapons drawn, he stood facing the outlaw. "You are mad!" Red Roy exclaimed. "Your life is in my hands, and if you insist I shall have to take it. Think twice before you act, Bristol. A signal from me, and you are riddled with bullets. Will you have it?"

"A bold bluff, but it won't work," retorted Dick. "If you had rifles covering me as you claim, that signal would now have been given, and I would be dead at your feet. Square yourself, now, and defend yourself if you can. It is war, and war to the very teeth!"

With his words, Dick dashed upon the man in red, whose weapon spoke quickly, the bullet just grazing Dick's face, and Dick's revolver making response in the same second, but without apparent effect. The next instant the two men were in deadly embrace, swaying this way and that, each struggling with all his might to gain the mastery over the other.

CHAPTER XVII.

MARKS DICK'S DEFEAT

A FEW moments of this terrible business sufficed to prove to Dick that his foe had no help at hand, and that he had rightly guessed his story about the rifles had been only a bluff. This being so, Dick bent all his strength to overcome the man, but he found he had an antagonist who was quite equal to his best efforts. Red Roy was a powerful man, and while he could not overcome Dick, neither could Dick overpower him. It looked as though it would turn out a case of endurance, unless one or the other resorted to a weapon. This last Dick did not desire to do, and his attention had to be given to prevent the outlaw from doing it.

The fight was hard, fierce, desperate, and no knowing how it might have ended had it remained a struggle between these two alone. But, it did not. Presently the outlaw seemed to gain a momentary advantage, and Dick was

carried backward against the rocky wall with considerable force. There was a momentary pause, and the next instant the rock gave way, and both tumbled through, still locked in deadly embrace. There was a muffled thud immediately following, as the rock door swung shut, and they were in total darkness. Then it was that Red Roy called for help, sending out one loud signal cry, while at the same time he continued the fierce life-and-death struggle.

Deadwood Dick fought with all the fury he could command, but having to guard against a weapon in the hands of his foe, he could do little more than act on the defensive. No word was spoken, but the labored breathing of both was hard and fierce, as they struggled this way and that in the darkness on the rock floor of the cavern passage.

Soon steps were heard, and presently a light was seen, rapidly growing brighter, and in a moment more another masked man lent his assistance to Red Roy, and Dick was soon overpowered.

"My curse on you!" Red Roy panted, as he and his timely ally held Dick to the floor. "You would not accept your life when it was offered you, now you have forfeited it altogether. You will never see the light of day again, and the world will never be the wiser concerning what became of you. You have at last found your match, and more, and may reflect upon the adage that it is a long lane that has no turn. The trapper has been trapped at last."

"Make sure of my death while you have the chance," grated Dick. "If by any means I escape, the world will not hold you. It is not wide enough nor deep enough to hide you from my vengeance."

"You will not escape, be sure of that. Nothing but your death can now avail, and that will be swift and sure."

They rested a moment, Red Roy and his ally; then, taking Dick up, one holding his hands and the other his feet, they bore him along down the passage to the point where the inky chasm yawned.

Dick instinctively realized what his fate was to be. He struggled, but in vain, the odds being against him; and he was presently swung over the edge and sent down, down, and still down, to the Stygian depths of a bottomless pit.

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